

THE ISLAMIC TRAVELOGUE 1428 – 9

[2007 – 8]

FROM SOUTH AMERICA TO SOUTH-EAST
ASIA : TRAVELING THROUGH THE SOUTH IN
THE MISSION OF ISLAM

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Let us, with Allah's blessed name, embark from my Caribbean island-home in Trinidad, for an exclusive 'southern hemisphere' Islamic lecture-tour that will commence in February 2007 and end one year later in February 2008. This journey will take us through Venezuela and Argentina in South America, Botswana, South Africa and Zimbabwe in Southern Africa, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka in South Asia, to Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore in South-East Asia. We will sometimes have to visit the same country twice. At other times, because of unjust war on *Islām*, we will have to cancel visits to countries such as Australia and New Zealand even though there are large numbers of Muslims awaiting us. And at yet other times the host communities in places such as Fiji Islands and India would themselves decide against hosting a lecture-tour out of fear. And finally we will sorrowfully have to postpone visits to countries such as Iran, Yemen and the city of Hong Kong because of time constraint.

I had been resident for ten wonderful years in New York up to the end of September 2001, and I was present at New York's J F Kennedy Airport on that fateful 9/11 morning when the American CIA and the Israeli Mossad jointly planned, attacked and demolished the World Trade Center's Twin Towers in Lower Manhattan and then falsely put the blame for that supreme act of terrorism on Arabs and Muslims.

The mysterious and essentially godless Jewish-Christian alliance that now rules the world on behalf of the Euro-Jewish State of Israel may wish to challenge my claim of CIA/Israeli Mossad *responsibility* for planning and

executing the 9/11 terrorist attack on America. They may do so while insisting instead, that the American government is truthful in assigning *responsibility*, and hence *blame*, on Arabs and Muslims. In that case I invite them as well as others who are stubbornly of the same view, to come forward that we might jointly pray for the eternal curse of the One God and of His Prophets, on whoever assigns *responsibility* and *blame* falsely in this matter.

I left New York two weeks after the 9/11 terrorist attack on America to conduct a pre-planned Islamic lecture-tour of South Africa, and then traveled constantly for two years before returning to Trinidad in August 2003. I have never returned to USA since then. The story of those travels was told in my first Islamic Travelogue that was published at the end of 2003. It evoked such a positive response from readers that I decided to sacrifice the time and effort to write this second travelogue for the lecture-tour of 2007-8 even though I have important books to write. May Allah Most Kind grant that this humble effort might inspire at least some of our readers to also leave the comforts of their home and to travel in the noble mission of *Islām. Amīn!*

I know for certain that if my widely-traveled teacher, *Maulānā* Dr Muhammad Fadlur Rahman Ansari, or his even more widely-traveled teacher, *Maulānā* ‘Abdul ‘Aleem Siddiqui, had made the effort and taken the time to write their own travelogues of their travels in the mission of Islam, the information that would have been recorded, together with their personal observations and insights, would have been of great benefit today. *Maulānā* Ansari did make a start in that direction when he produced ‘*The Roving Ambassador of Islām*’, a travelogue which briefly recorded some of the events of *Maulānā* Siddiqui’s 1950 world-tour.

I wrote a few new books during the three and a half years that I had spent at home in Trinidad (August 2003 – February 2007) and since I am my own publisher I had to travel to Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia to personally supervise

the work of printing. But before I describe those new books let me first tell a story.

THE STORY OF HOW I BECAME A WRITER

*I*t is an interesting story that I now tell of how I was initiated into writing books on *Islām*, and I tell the story perchance that in years to come it might benefit at least some of our dear readers, or their children, who have an aptitude for writing. It was July 1971 and I was 29 years old. I had to appear for my final year examinations in order to graduate with *al-Ijāzah al-‘Āliyah* from the Aleemiyah Institute of Islamic Studies in Karachi, Pakistan. In the Islamic system of higher education a *Shaikh*, or Islamic scholar, would grant *Ijāzah*, or permission, to a student when he was satisfied that such a student was qualified and competent to teach the subjects in which he was granted *Ijāzah*. The modern university has adopted the same *Ijāzah* and renamed it a ‘degree’

My own *Shaikh* and teacher, was the distinguished Islamic scholar and Sufi *Shaikh* of the *Qaderiyyah* spiritual order, *Maulānā* Dr Muhammad Fadlur Rahman Ansari (*rahimahullah*). I used to address him with the formal title, ‘*Maulānā Sahib*’, during my early years as his student, but I later adopted the more familiar and affectionate ‘*Abbuḡān*’ (i.e., beloved father). He responded to the event of my final-year examinations in 1971 by doing something he had never done before. He announced that he would himself set the examination papers for the final year class, and that he would also himself correct the answer-scripts.

I was never a good student of Arabic, and my results in all the Arabic language examinations were just sufficient to pass. But among the subjects in which we were examined was Comparative Religion, and that year the religion

studied was Buddhism. We had been tutored in that final year on Buddhism by the illustrious scholar/philosopher, Professor Yusuf Saleem Chisty (*may Allah have mercy on his soul*), and it was in that examination that I finally struck gold.

Dr Ansari set an examination paper with eight questions of which we had to answer any five within a period of three hours. I was left alone in the examination room within two hours of commencement of the examination, the others having already completed their answers and departed. At the end of the allotted three hours I had completed answers to only three questions. I then requested more time and Dr Ansari responded to my request by sending a message: *“Give Imran as much time as he wants”*. So I took another two hours to answer the other two questions.

A few days later I was summoned to Dr Ansari’s office where he informed me, without even a smile on his face, that he had given me 91/100 marks for my Comparative Religion examination, and that this was the highest mark he had ever given to any student. But he then requested me to return to my room and answer the three remaining questions in the examination paper that I had not answered. It was a strange request, but I dared not ask for an explanation.

After I had completed answering the three remaining questions and he had corrected my answers, he again summoned me to order that I take the eight answers that I had written and rewrite them, while integrating them to make a book. That required some work of editing, as well as documenting the references. He also ordered that I sit in his office on the other side of his own desk directly opposite to him while I did that work.

He had his reason for asking me to sit in his presence while I worked, but I could not fathom that reason. Was it because he knew that this was going to be the last period of time that we would spend together? For some time prior

to my graduation in September 1971 I had started to count the months left for me to travel back home to my widowed mother in Trinidad, and I had done so with a plaque that was prominently displayed on the wall of my hostel room. 20 months became 19, then 18 and so on. He heard about it, and knew about my resolve to leave Aleemiyah and travel back home after graduation, and it must have caused him sadness.

Or did he want me to work in his presence in order to communicate an unspoken message to me? What could that message have been? There was the matter of my extraordinary dream in which I had seen a large flooded river with dangerous currents and in which all the students of Aleemiyah were drowning and I saw myself swimming to them and saving them one at a time. I went to him with the dream and he promptly interpreted it for me. He said that I was destined to play precisely that role in life.

Dr Ansari never expressed any dissenting view in respect of anything I had written in those answers to the eight questions. This was going to be *my* book and *I* would have to write it while expressing *my* views. He knew that I was a fiercely independent thinker and that he had himself fostered and encouraged my independence of thought. In the seven years I had spent as his student I had differed with him more often than all of the rest of his students. I would disagree with something he had said or taught and then, a few months later, I would meet with him and confess that I was now in agreement. It did not matter to me that it took a few months of reflection for me to agree. What mattered to me was that I should first be convinced before I accepted anything as knowledge – even if my own dear teacher had taught it.

Dr Ansari now explained to me his strange request that I answer the three remaining questions in the examination paper and then rewrite all eight answers in the form of a book. He told me that he had known many great scholars of *Islām* who had lived their entire lives and had died without ever

writing and publishing anything significant. He attributed that failure to their fear of writing and consequent fear of being judged harshly by peers. He wanted such fear to be banished from my heart, and that I should consequently have no fear of writing books in the scholarly life he hoped I would pursue upon graduation.

I did have an aptitude for writing and had already written, a few years earlier, an unpublished novel. I sat down directly in front of him and for the next three weeks I devoted myself to a sustained effort to complete my first book entitled '*Islām and Buddhism in the Modern World*'. There are some who have acclaimed it as the best book I have ever written. While I worked, *Maulānā* Ansari received visitors, talked to others on the telephone, consulted books in his great library, and interacted with his family-members resident on the ground floor of the building. I had somehow mustered the absolutely extraordinary courage a year earlier to propose marriage to his daughter, Sadia, and it was quite a distraction for me whenever she found an excuse to visit her father in his office.

In exactly 21 days time I handed the manuscript of the book to him and hastened to retreat from that office. He handed the manuscript back to me a few days later with 'narry a word of commendation. I looked at it and my face turned red with embarrassment. I thought that I knew the English language. After all I had graduated as a teen-ager from Trinidad's premier college (Queen's Royal College) with a distinction in English Language. But Dr Ansari used a red-ink pen to correct every single minute error of punctuation, spelling, sentence-construction, and even hand-writing in my manuscript, and by the time he was finished it had been transformed into another 'Red Sea'.

He was a perfectionist, and this was his way of sending me a message. He wanted that I, also, should strive to achieve such perfection. What a teacher! Readers should take heed to ensure that their children are so exposed

to true scholars of *Islām*, rather than to the charlatans who today use their checkbooks to assume leadership positions, or to the products of medieval institutions of higher Islamic learning who display complete innocence of the modern age.

Only later would I learn that he had decided to award me the '*Dr Ansari Gold Medal for High Merit*' in a grand convocation ceremony that had hastily been arranged for early September 1971, and that my book on Buddhism had played a significant role in winning for me that prestigious award. It should be clear he intended that the '*Dr Ansari Gold Medal for High Merit*' would inspire future students to strive for excellence. *Maulānā* died less than three years later in June 1974. I was the first student to win that award, and for mysterious reasons beyond my innocent ken, it turned out that I was also the last. And this was hardly flattering to his blessed memory. The '*Dr Ansari Gold Medal for High Merit*' was not the only thing he created that his inadequate successors demolished after his death. There were other casualties as well, over which we will mourn when I write my book on his life works and thought *Inshā Allāh*.

The most precious memory that I treasure concerning the writing of my first book was *Maulānā's* radiant smile and hint of laughter when he read my comment concerning Buddha whose father feared that his son would one day abandon the royal life and become a wandering beggar as predicted by a palace seer. The seer predicted that Gautama Buddha would act in that way on the day when he saw four things: an old man, a sick man, a diseased man and a dead man. The King built a palace for his son and took pains to scrupulously rid it of all those four unpleasant things. Instead, he filled it with joyous things such as music, singing girls, sports, etc. The young prince was then confined by royal decree to that palace. My comment that young Gautama Buddha was

“*confined in a cage of happiness*” won Dr Ansari’s smiling appreciation for its literary style.

Dr Ansari’s desire that I should become a writer was eventually fulfilled 25 years after his death. I was resident in New York at that time, and I wanted to offer a special gift to my dear teacher on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of his death. I wanted it to be such a gift as could not be matched by any other. I had just married Aisha two years earlier, and that marriage gave to me, for the first time, the domestic peace and tranquility as well as the encouragement and support I needed to devote myself to a sustained effort at writing. And so I worked for four years prior to that 25th death anniversary in 1998 to produce and publish a series of books under the title ‘*Ansari Memorial Series*’. It had since grown to over a dozen books, and I was now about to publish another four books.

Happily, I am not the only student of his who has been blessed with some recognition in the Islamic literary world as a writer. Professor Dr Abul Fadl Mohsin Ebrahim, Professor of Islamic Studies at the University of Durban in South Africa, and a very distinguished student of Dr Ansari, has already published several of his books in the field of Islamic Medical Ethics, and they have been received with respect. May Allah bless our brother with even greater literary accomplishments. *Āmīn*. There are other students as well, including *Maulānā* Dr Waffie Mohammed of Trinidad, who have been writing and publishing books on Islam. *Maulānā* Siddiq Ahmad Nasir of Guyana in South America, who is now resident in Trinidad, is a brilliant and accomplished student of Dr Ansari, and I pray for the day when he, also, would devote the time and effort for writing books on *Islām*, and would eventually win recognition as a writer. *Āmīn*

FOUR NEW BOOKS

Let us return to the subject of the four new books I had written during the period 2003-2007 while I was resident in Trinidad, and for whose publication I now had to travel to Malaysia. The first book was entitled ‘*Sūrah al-Kahf and the Modern Age*’, and it was my main work on that *Sūrah* of the blessed *Qur’ān*. It offered an interpretation and analysis of the four main parables/narratives of the *Sūrah* that explained the *reality* of a mysterious modern age. I consider it to be the most important of my books. I had started writing it while I was still resident in New York in the late nineties, but had to interrupt my writing when Ariel Sharon arrogantly marched into *Masjid al-Aqsā* in Jerusalem with his boots on, and with a thousand Israeli soldiers in tow. It was a deliberate act of wicked provocation intended to fan the flames of violence. Not even the much-maligned *Apartheid* regime in South Africa had ever shown such arrogance, contempt and disrespect for the world of the sacred. When that regime enforced its unjust ‘group areas law’ and people were thrown out of their ancestral homes to make way for the whites, the *Apartheid* regime in South Africa had that much fear of the Lord-God never to interfere with, or disrespect, churches, temples, *Masājid*, etc.

I responded to Ariel Sharon’s deliberate disrespect for *Masjid al-Aqsā* and provocation by setting aside the writing of ‘*Sūrah al-Kahf and the Modern Age*’ and turning instead to devote urgent attention to writing ‘*Jerusalem in the Qur’ān*’. That book, published by Allah’s Mercy and Grace in 2002, became my first best-seller.

The second book, entitled ‘*Sūrah al-Kahf: Text Translation and Modern Commentary*’, was a humble attempt at offering a modern *Tafsīr* (i.e., explanation) of the entire *Sūrah* of the *Qur’ān*. I used the word ‘modern’ in the context of a strange new world that had emerged in the modern age. This was a world which the classical commentators of the *Qur’ān* had not experienced, and yet I believed that *Sūrah al-Kahf* was the key to

understanding the *reality* of that strange new world. There was therefore a need to reinterpret the whole *Sūrah* in order to attempt to demonstrate its capacity to offer an explanation of the strange and mysterious modern age. My translation and commentary on *Sūrah al-Kahf* was meant to supplement, and certainly not to supersede, the classical commentaries. It was also meant to function as a companion volume to my main work on the *Sūrah*, i.e., '*Sūrah al-Kahf and the Modern Age*'.

And the third book was a voluminous collection of thirty-two essays which I intended to publish under the title '*Signs of the Last Day in the Modern Age*' and in which I analyzed, in the context of *Signs of the Last Day*, a number of current political, economic, social and even religious events that were constantly and ominously unfolding in the strange modern age. But it would sometimes take a discerning reader to locate the link between an essay and *Signs of the Last Day*. A good example of such was the very last essay in the book on the subject of *Murābaha* transactions of so-called Islamic banks.

Sabina Watanabe in Kuala Lumpur would make an unsuccessful attempt, after she had proof-read this third book, to convince me to break it up into two or more books based on the differing subject-matters dealt with in the essays. As much as I would have liked to do that, it would have been too costly.

Later during the year I would write a fourth book, or, rather, booklet, entitled '*The Gold Dinār and Silver Dirham – Islām and the Future of Money*', but more about that book later.

I embarked on travel for another reason as well. I had started construction of a home in Trinidad and I owed quite some money (interest-free) to the builder. I had halted construction after the completion of the ground floor (with one bedroom), and I then made a promise to the builder that I would

travel to Malaysia to print and market my new books and would not return unless the debt with him was fully paid.

FINANCING MY TRAVELS

Masjid Jāmi'ah in San Fernando, Trinidad (known locally as *Jama Masjid*), provided some assistance to meet travel expenses, and so too did many others in Trinidad. Malaysian Airlines, through friends of mine in the Islamic Welfare Society of that airline, provided me with a free return ticket from Buenos Aires to Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia with an onward stop-over in Johannesburg, South Africa, and a return stop-over in Cape Town one year later.

The organizers of the *International Conference on the Gold Dinār Economy* which was held in Kuala Lumpur in July 2007, and in which I participated as an invited speaker (I received the invitation to participate in the conference even before I left Trinidad), very kindly offered to give me the cash value of a return ticket from Trinidad to Malaysia so that I could use that money to fund my further travels. They did so because I already had a ticket to Malaysia donated by Malaysian Airlines.

While help came from many to assist me in meeting my considerable expenses of one year of travel, accommodation, meals, etc., a significant part of expenses was also met through sales of my books and DVDs of my lectures.

CHOOSING MY TIME OF DEPARTURE AND TRAVEL ROUTE

I was departing from Trinidad just before the commencement of the Cricket World Cup that the West Indies was hosting, and I deliberately

planned my time of departure to get away from the World Cup even though I loved the game of cricket. I recognized World Cup competitions in cricket and football, Olympic Games, Miss World and Miss Universe beauty contests, etc. to be the product of *Dajjal's* amazing capacity for deception. His plan was to distract attention from the universal *messianic* dictatorship that was descending upon all of mankind, and from the ever-escalating oppression that the Euro-Jewish State of Israel was inflicting upon the Palestinian people.

Dajjal's has deceptively concealed his present war on Islam behind the name 'war on terror'. War on Islam has been unleashed simultaneously with the greatest ever intensification of oppression in Palestine. With war on Islam he brainwashes gullible humanity against Islam and Muslims. One can now realize the immense difficulty that Muslims would encounter when they attempt to defend Islam and to mobilize a response to that oppression. Such Muslims would be demonized as 'terrorists' and even friends (whose backbones were made of recycled paper) would begin to shun them and avoid public contact them.

I deliberately avoided the cheaper route from Trinidad through London to Kuala Lumpur in order to protect myself from a British Government that was actively participating in the United States-led 'war on terror' (a euphemism for 'war on *Islām*'). The British, American and Israeli governments had sunk to the lowest levels of intimidation, deceit and wickedness by instituting, post 9/11, a terrifying regime of torture of innocent Muslims. Their crime, for which Muslims were being tortured in the *Abū Gharīb* prison in Iraq, in *Guantanamo* in Cuba, in Israeli prisons, and God alone knows where else in the world, was that of resisting oppression in the Holy Land and in other parts of the Muslim world.

There were scholars of *Islām* and so-called Muslim leaders who had chosen to join the oppressors in condemning Muslims as 'terrorists' and in

unashamedly proclaiming themselves to be “*friends of America*” (i.e., friends of the American government in matters pertaining to Islam and Muslims), and then there were others who had chosen to remain diplomatically silent about American oppression in order to protect themselves, their public image, jobs, promotions, businesses, US visas, status, etc. I had chosen a different response and, as a consequence, it was no longer possible for me to travel through London.

ATTACKED BY A LOCAL ISLAMIC ORGANIZATION

Even though I had chosen a safer though longer and more expensive route from Trinidad via Caracas, Buenos Aires and Johannesburg to get to Kuala Lumpur, I still recognized grave danger in travel since I had been the innocent victim of an evil public attack in Trinidad three years earlier from the misguided leader of a local Muslim organization. He was so incensed by my strident and sustained criticism and condemnation of Anglo-American-Israeli oppression of Muslims in different parts of the world that he and the rest of the misguided leadership of that Islamic organization issued a public circular against me falsely declaring that I was engaged in “*terrorist-like preaching of Islām*” and that I was “*a great security risk.*” They even declared a ban on me, still in force after four years, preventing me from lecturing, teaching or delivering the *Khutbah al-Jumu’ah* at any of the schools or *Masājid* over which the organization exercised control. He went on to declare his organization to have “*friendly relations*” with America.

They will one day have to answer for what they did to me in a court which, I am certain, would recognize such conduct as ‘evil’ and ‘sinful’. After all the blessed Prophet (*sallallahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*) had ordered Muslims “*if you see something wrong and evil, change it with your hand, and if you cannot do so, then with your tongue, and if you cannot do so, then with your heart, but*

that is the weakest state of faith.” All that I had done was to speak out against the unjust and barbarous American/British/Israeli oppression and slaughter of my brother Muslims in Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine and elsewhere, and for this I was attacked by those who did not detest that oppression – not even in their hearts – but rather declared themselves “*friends of America*”.

Local television and radio stations as well as major local newspapers were all owned and controlled by an elite firmly located in the American camp. They had a field day for one long week as they took the cue from the circular to plunge their knives into me. Those responsible for that attack on me as well as those who gleefully joined it were all *Dajjāl’s* faithful disciples. The woodlice had come out of the woodwork to reveal their faces and that was beneficial.

Happily for me the local Muslim community, as well as the Police Service which interviewed me *at my request*, recognized the attack to be a case of character assassination and totally dismissed it. In response to the attack the head of the management committee of one *Masjid* tore up the circular and threw it into the garbage bin, while many others similarly declared their disdain for the ban. It is my hope that this travelogue would awaken the conscience of Muslims who may have been ignorant of the subject, or misinformed. *Āmīn*.

I was also grateful to the Trinidad and Tobago government which refused to take any action against me. The government showed its disdain for the matter by never bothering to even comment on it. Had such an attack occurred in Israel, Australia, Singapore, USA, UK or other such countries, or had there been a different kind of government in Trinidad and Tobago, it was certain that they would have exploited the opportunity to act against me. After all, I remember only too well the contempt and public ridicule with which another political party in Trinidad and Tobago had responded when I advised a

Muslim Member of Parliament on the Islamic religious view pertaining to the subject of *the rule of a woman*.

Although the attack created no danger for me within Trinidad and Tobago, it was entirely possible that the external impact could be different, and that I could be stopped and interrogated by Immigration in any country I visited. Any Immigration Officer could pose the question: “*Why did your own people make such a grave charge against you?*”

I held the view that USA had succeeded Britain as the leader of a mysterious Jewish-Christian alliance which controlled the world and was waging war on *Islām* and Muslims on behalf of the Euro-Jewish State of Israel. I recognized that Jewish-Christian alliance to have created modern western secular civilization and to be using that civilization to embrace all of mankind in a decadent godless embrace. The Jewish-Christian alliance had secured major victories in the destruction of the Ottoman Islamic Caliphate and *Dār al-Islām*, and their replacement with secular and essentially godless client-States in the Republic of Turkey and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. As a consequence, the Jewish-Christian alliance effectively controlled the *Haramain* and the *Hajj*.

Finally, I recognized that Jewish-Christian alliance to be the Gog and Magog world-order, and hence I also recognized the fulfillment in this modern age of Prophet Muhammad’s prophecy located in *Sahīh Bukhārī* that “*people would continue to perform the Hajj and ‘Umrah even after the release of Gog and Magog, but the Last Hour would not come before the (valid) Hajj no longer existed.*”

I was truly startled when I finally grasped, after fifteen years of effort, a very difficult verse of the *Qur’ān* which anticipated the emergence of a Jewish-Christian alliance and which strictly prohibited Muslim friendship and

alliance with such Jews and Christians. I now take the opportunity to translate and explain the verse:

“Oh you who have faith (in Allah Most High) do not take (such) Jews and Christians as your friends, allies (patrons and sponsors) who themselves are friends and allies of each other. *(Thus the Qur’an did not prohibit Muslim friendship and alliance with all Jews and Christians. Rather it anticipated a time when Jews and Christians would strangely and mysteriously reconcile with each other, and would then go on to establish Jewish-Christian friendship and alliance. It was with reference to only such Jews and Christians that the divine command was sent down prohibiting friendship and alliance.)* **And whoever amongst you turns to them (with friendship and as an ally) becomes, verily, one of them.** *(Such Muslims would no longer be recognized as Muslims and would hence become Kuffār.)* **Surely Allah does not guide those who commit Dhulm.** *(The verse here delivers a warning that the trademark of that Jewish-Christian alliance would be their acts of Dhulm, i.e., injustice, oppression and wickedness, and that Muslims should have the common-sense not to associate with such people whom Allah Himself would not guide).”*

(Qur’ān, al-Māidah, 5:49)

This verse of the blessed *Qur’ān* had never before been explained this way, and yet it delivered the mother of all warnings against ever entering into the embrace of those who today ruled the world (i.e., the Gog and Magog world-order) and were waging war on Islam and Muslims. And this was precisely what the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia had done, and what so many *Salafī* scholars could not recognize. It was in anticipation of the oppression unleashed by precisely that Jewish-Christian alliance that Prophet Muhammad (*sallallahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*) had declared 1400 years ago:

“You (Muslims) will most certainly fight the Jews (i.e., those Jews who are oppressing you), and you will most certainly kill them (i.e., you will be victorious) to such an extent that even the stone will speak and say Oh Muslim, there is (such) a Jew hiding behind me, so come and kill him”.

It was therefore quite clear that I had done the right thing in standing up and condemning oppression since if the Prophet himself been alive today he, also, would most certainly have condemned oppression and, in consequence, would been attacked by the Jewish/Christian alliance and its friends and allies, and declared a “*terrorist*” and “*great security risk*”, etc.

Allah Most High had declared, “*those who turned towards them with friendship and as allies would belong to them*”, hence we needed an Islamic political theology that would respond to the implications of the verse. We would have to revisit the vexing theological issue of who is a Muslim? and who is a *Kāfir*? Pakistani Muslims were already openly giving vent to their anger and anguish by chanting in public: “*Dog, Musharraf, Dog*”! There were many Musharrafs in the Muslim world, and we needed a theology with which to justify our refusal to ever pray over the bodies of such people, or to ever stand at their graves.

Let me also warn of other unwitting allies of that alliance who have lately emerged, namely certain Islamic scholars who dominate Islamic Cable Television around the world and use that medium to lecture Muslims against committing acts of terrorism. In doing so these deaf, dumb and blind scholars deliver unspoken recognition of Muslim responsibility for such acts of terrorism as the 9/11 attack on America. Readers should publicly question them on the subject until they are forced to come to terms with their subliminally projected agenda pursued on behalf of the Jewish-Christian alliance that now controls power in the world. Readers should carefully note that such scholars never recognize and denounce the greatest terrorist-States that the world has ever known. Such scholars know full well that if they were ever to criticize Israel or USA for their state-sponsored terrorism and for genocide in occupied Gazzah, it would spell goodbye to their dominance over

Islamic Cable Television and to flying hotshot around the world without any visa problems and without any fear of ever being detained and interrogated for three hours and then denied entry into any country.

Readers must know that it was already a very dangerous world in which I ventured to travel in early 2007. An attack on Iran was expected at any time. If such was to occur it might become impossible for me to travel back home. But there were many who prayed for me, and who kept on praying for my safe return all through my year of travel. Some of them even belonged to the very organization whose leader (the local Musharraf) had attacked me. I am convinced that those prayers protected me from danger and brought me safely back home.

I also armed myself with the continuous recitation of:

Sūrah al-Kahf (on every day of *Jumu'ah*),

Sūrah al-Wāqī'ah and *Sūrah al-Mulk* (every day), and

Sūrah Yāsin (in the early-morning prayer),

and set out on my travels on the blessed day of *Jumu'ah* corresponding to February 22nd. 2007. I would not return to my home until more than a year later (February 29th 2008), but it would also be on the blessed day of *Jumu'ah*.

A RUDE SURPRISE

A rude surprise awaited me in the waiting lounge at the Piarco International Airport in Trinidad as I waited to board my *Aerpostal* flight to Caracas in Venezuela. I had worked for some years as a Foreign Service Officer in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, and during that time had made many dear friends and colleagues. One

of them, now an Ambassador, was on the same flight with me to Caracas, and chose to totally ignore me. Not a word passed between us, not even a smile, even though we twice faced each other directly. The Ambassador must have been terrified by the sight of me dressed in a long white gown, a full beard and a *Shaikh's* hat on my head and must have muttered: “*Lord help me, what would happen to my diplomatic career if a photograph appeared in the next day's newspapers of an Ambassador fraternizing with someone dressed in robes like Usama bin Ladin?*”

As much as I would like the reader to smile as I try to respond with a bit of frivolity to the incident, readers would share the pain and anguish I felt in my heart when, for no just cause, an old and dear friend and colleague chose to so ignore me. War on *Islām* was taking its toll.

CARACAS - VENEZUELA

A socialist revolution was sweeping South and Central America, and Venezuela's Hugo Chavez was located at the very heart of that revolution. The revolution was militantly anti-American and anti-capitalist. Venezuela, like Guyana, was a South American producer of gold, and as a consequence Caracas had attracted a significant and a wealthy Jewish community. I was informed that they exercised significant control over the anti-Chavez local Venezuelan media. Venezuela was also a major oil-exporting country the bulk of whose oil was purchased by USA.

It was a well-known fact that the American CIA and Israeli *Mossad* had very close ties with each other and so, when an unsuccessful *coup d'état* was attempted against Chavez a few years ago, and he publicly accused the American President of responsibility, I felt certain the Israeli *Mossad* had a role in the effort. I remembered that an Israeli national had been arrested two

years earlier in Trinidad while holed-out in a shack in the forest. The Trinidadian couple who had taken him in, had reported him to the police in hope of a reward. When he was arrested, police located a stolen Trinidad and Tobago Immigration stamp in his possession. He was eventually fined in court, his fine was paid, and he was swiftly spirited away to Israel. My view that this was a dangerous and profoundly embarrassing *Mossad faux-pas* appeared to have been confirmed when no less a person than the Trinidad and Tobago Prime Minister had to later travel to Israel ostensibly to purchase arms.

Chavez survived the coup and, since then, had increased his opposition to US/Israeli influence in South America. I was certain that efforts would continue to remove him from power and that Trinidad and Tobago would continue to be used as a base for plotting against him. My visit to Venezuela therefore had a potential importance that transcended the usual lectures on *Islām*.

The political opposition in Venezuela comprised at its heart the elite of the society who had traditionally enjoyed the fruits of political power and who invariably supported the Anglo/American/Israeli rulers of the world. Part of the Chavez plan to counter the attacks of the political opposition was to counter rising food prices by imposing price-control on food. Such a plan was bound to fail. Prophet Muhammad (*sallallahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*) would never have done such a thing. The supermarket owners naturally responded with hoarding such food supplies over which price control had been imposed. Chavez then threatened to nationalize those businesses that were engaged in hoarding food supplies. The Venezuelan government appeared to be largely ignorant of the bogus and fraudulent nature of modern money, and of the way it was being used as a weapon to undermine governments that dared to resist the Judeo-Christian alliance who today ruled the world.

I landed in Caracas on a Friday morning and got my first taste of Venezuelan political education on the drive from the airport to the city. Again and again, as I studied Latin American politics, I found much confusion in the minds of some who followed the religious path, and even in some who pursued spirituality. They seemed to have difficulty in recognizing that moral values lay at the very foundation of the religious way of life, and that moral values included political and economic justice. It was soon clear to me that there was an urgent need for an intelligent articulation of some of the political and economic theories that Islam had to offer in order for such to function as a guide to success. Most important of all, perhaps, was the imperative of the ‘free’ and ‘fair’ market. Price controls and nationalization of private property and privately owned business would eventually so destroy the market that such policies would lead to failure.

Hugo Chavez was a just leader who had the courage to denounce the government of USA as well as big American corporations for their terrorism, oppression and their unjust and relentless exploitation of the peoples and resources of the non-European world. In addition he was fair and just to Muslims, and so they enjoyed in Venezuela a haven of security in a world that was increasingly insecure for Muslims.

There could be no doubt that the white European elite in the American continent had consistently oppressed the non-white Native American people, as well as the Africans who had been brought to the Americas as slaves. At long last South America was getting non-white leaders such as Venezuela’s Hugo Chavez and Bolivia’s Evo Morales who struggled to deliver political and economic justice to the long-oppressed non-white South American people.

Later that day I attended *Salāt al-Jumu’ah* at the grand Saudi-built *Masjid* (Spanish – *Mezquita*) *Shaikh Ibrahim* in Caracas and met with

the Saudi Director as well as his Saudi-educated Colombian 1st. Secretary. The entire cost of construction of the magnificent multi-million dollar building was borne by *Shaikh* Ibrahim himself, but the land on which the building stood was donated by the Republic of Venezuela in order to reciprocate a grant of land in Saudi Arabia for the construction of a Venezuelan diplomatic mission in that country. King Faisal of Saudi Arabia (*rahimahullah*) succeeded in making that agreement with the then Venezuelan President Carlos Andres Peres, and it remains a tangible testimony to the love for Islam that resided in the heart of that noble and courageous Saudi ruler. Like so many South American heads of government who opposed the policies of the Anglo/American/Israeli rulers of the world, that Saudi ruler also suffered the fate of being assassinated. Post-Faisal Saudi Arabia quickly learn the ominous lesson sent through the assassination and proceeded to become once again a faithful and loyal client-State of the Anglo/American/Israeli triple alliance that now rules the world. The Saudis acted in similar way to many South American countries who were victims of such terrorist attacks that were planned and executed to remove leaders perceived to obstruct US plans of dominance over South America.

After the *Salāt al-Jumu'ah* (with the *Khutbah* in Spanish) was over an announcement was made concerning my lecture which was to take place at the *Masjid* Hall the next night.

I was absolutely delighted, on my first night in Caracas, to meet with the 92-year old Azizuddin. He was a native of Suriname and a gifted goldsmith who had lived for some time practicing that trade in my own Trinidad. He had decided to migrate to Venezuela because gold was easily obtainable in

Venezuela but was difficult to import into Trinidad because of import restrictions imposed by the then British government.

I had met with him 21 years earlier during my previous visit to Caracas and I was excited about meeting with him again. I had taken a complete set of my books, as well as a set of DVD recordings of many of my recent lectures, as a gift for Br. Haroon and his family, and they were all delighted to receive them, but none was as delighted as grandpa Azizuddin. He and I chatted that night until I could hardly stay awake. At that advanced age he was not only blessed with good health but was still amazingly lucid in his thought and displayed no signs of fading memory. Indeed we carried on an intense conversation concerning the event of the attempt to crucify the True Messiah, Jesus the son of Mary (*'alaihi al-Salam*). And we discussed for quite some time my firm rejection of the theory of substitution. This theory had made its way into recent Muslim thought through an alleged copy of the Gospel of Barnabas that had conveniently emerged out of the Vatican library a hundred years ago. The explanation of the event that I had derived from my interpretation of the Quranic texts so intrigued Azizuddin that he later confessed he hardly slept that night.

He reminded me that the reason why he had such love for me was because he had had a conversation in 1969 with my dear teacher, *Maulana* Dr. Muhammad Fazlur Rahman Ansari, and *Maulana* had mentioned my name to him as the student who would continue his work. He was very curious to know why I had departed from the trail blazed by *Maulana* Abdul Aleem Siddiqui and *Maulana* Ansari in publicly and consistently addressing the subjects of *Dajjal*, Gog and Magog, the State of Israel, etc. which they had hardly ever addressed. I explained to him that Dr. Ansari did not train me to be a mechanical student who would restrict himself to simply teaching what he was taught. Rather he trained me to assess in a critical way all knowledge,

including all that he had taught me, and to then seek to advance the frontiers of knowledge. What I had done in addressing those new subjects did not constitute a departure from the trail blazed by my teacher and his teacher, but, rather, it constituted an unusual yet significant advancement of that trail. I was also careful to enter into the record that the advance in thought and knowledge had taken place entirely through Divine Grace.

Azizuddin continued to regale me during my stay in Caracas with interesting anecdotes of people and events of long ago. His grand-father, for example, worked in the royal court of a Muslim ruler whose princely Indian State's capital was located in the city of Allahabad. He was a highly trusted messenger/*envoi* of the Muslim ruler who conveyed messages from the Muslim Prince to the foreign Ambassadors accredited to his Court. It was while delivering messages to the Persian Ambassador that his grandfather fell in love with the Ambassador's highly educated daughter. When his grandfather presented to the Ambassador a proposal of marriage for his daughter (to which the young woman had previously privately consented) the Ambassador scornfully rejected it. The Ambassador was outraged that a mere messenger should seek the hand of his high-class daughter, and he proceeded to demand of the Muslim ruler that the messenger not return to his home. When his proposal was rejected, Azizuddin's grandfather proceeded to elope with the Ambassador's daughter. They both took a ship to the Caribbean and settled in Suriname where the well-read Persian woman made a name for herself as a teacher and educator. She also visited Trinidad and made an impact on that country's Muslim population as well. She eventually died in Caracas and was buried in that city.

On Saturday night I lectured at the grand Caracas *Masjid* on the subject of 'Signs of the Last Day in the Modern Age'. The lecture attracted an audience comprised of Latinos, Arabs and people from various parts of the

Caribbean. The function started at about 7.15 pm just after *Salat al-Maghrib* and did not end until after 10 pm. In-between we broke for *Salāt al-Ishā*. There was a simultaneous translation of the lecture in the Spanish language and that took up considerable time. I focused on the narrative/parable of *Dhūl Qarnain* in *Sūrah al-Kahf* of the *Qur'ān* and that took me to the subject of Gog and Magog. The lecture was very well received, particularly by Arab Muslims who would have been familiar with *Sūrah al-Kahf* but must have been surprised by the analysis conducted in the lecture. A few Venezuelan converts to Islam attended the lecture and one of them, who had been a Euro-Jew prior to accepting Islam, was quite disturbed by remarks I made concerning Jews and the Signs of the Last Day. But he was quite relieved and even pleased when I explained to him that Muslims can remain friends and allies with any people, including Euro-Jews, provided that they were not hostile to Islam, they did not oppress or wage war on Muslims, nor support those who did so.

I promised the gathering that if Allah Most Kind allowed me to successfully complete my travels and to return to Caracas one year later, *Insha Allah*, that I would then address for them in a follow-up lecture, the subject of *Dajjal*. Azizuddin made a great effort in translating my lecture to Spanish, but insisted that I should make the effort to recover my knowledge of *la lengua Español* (i.e., the Spanish language). I used to teach Spanish at the Chaguanas Government (elementary) School in my hometown of Chaguanas, Trinidad, when I was 19 years of age, but had since lost the capacity to understand and speak the language. But it also became clear to me that there was a need for me to have my books (particularly 'Jerusalem in the Qur'an') translated into the Spanish language.

After that public lecture I was pleasantly surprised to find a large number of people assembling every night in the home where I was staying. Many of

those who came night after night were young Venezuelan converts to *Islām*. I would give a talk every night following which they would ask questions. It reflected a tremendous thirst for knowledge.

Caracas is a city of many hills and valleys and while driving back home that night after the lecture I enjoyed the beautiful sight of lights of the city. The poor of the city had built their homes on the mountain-sides and I could behold lights rising up the mountains to the top, and lights in the valleys below. The lights of Caracas by night are truly beautiful. Caracas is also a city with startling contrasts of wealth and of sprawling slums. But like so many other modern cities there was massive traffic congestion and one had to make allowance for being detained in endless frustrating hours of traffic jams.

I made mention over breakfast the next day of a Venezuelan woman about whom my teacher, *Maulana* Fazlur Rahman Ansari, had spoken often and with great love. She had become his spiritual disciple during his visit to Caracas in 1969. I mentioned that she had translated into Spanish many of the *Maulana's* booklets and that these translations should be published. To my great astonishment I was told that she was still alive and still resident in Caracas. Nadiya, my host's daughter, then hurried to her study-room and quickly returned with a big folder of all the translation work that had been done of *Maulana's* booklets. It was a moving experience indeed for me to go through that folder and to see once again documents that I had first seen in *Maulana's* library in Karachi many many years ago.

Some of those who attended the lecture on Saturday night had their appetite for knowledge whetted and they hungered for more, and so on Sunday afternoon they started arriving at Haroon's home. We started a lively discussion session after *Salāt al-ʿAsr* and by the time of *Salāt al-Maghrib* about thirty people were crowded into the sitting-room. Women outnumbered

men by two to one. By the time we ended and the last guests had left it was past 10.30 pm and I was literally falling asleep.

The very first question which was posed by a Venezuelan Sister pertained to the payment of fines in camels and other animals. How should we apply that law today? That question launched us on a long and exciting discussion on the subject of ‘money’ in Islam. Much of what I had to say was absolutely new to them. For example, I asked the question: Why did the Prophet (*sallallahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*) declare that the exchange by Zaid ibn Harith (*radiallahu ‘anhu*) of two baskets (of inferior quality) dates for one basket of (superior quality) dates to be *Haram* and *Riba* even though the value on both sides of such a transaction was equal? Rather, the Prophet (*sallallahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*) insisted that the two baskets of inferior quality dates should have been sold, and that money which was received from the sale should have been used to buy the one basket of superior quality dates. But ‘Umar (*radiallahu ‘anhu*) exchanged one camel for four and that transaction was permitted. Similarly, Ali (*radiallahu ‘anhu*) exchanged one camel for twenty, and that transaction also, was permitted. Why then was an unequal exchange of dates prohibited, but an unequal exchange of camels permitted?

No one could answer that question.

Larisa, a non-Muslim Venezuelan girl who was Nadiya’s student and friend, did an excellent job of translation into Spanish. But Nadiya’s grandfather, the 92-year-old Azizuddin, also did more than his share of translation, and so did Meysaloum, the Venezuelan-born Lebanese girl who had to keep her Arabic-speaking grandmother constantly informed of the discussion. Indeed there were a few others as well who were helping out with simultaneous translations and so we frequently had to put up with a fairly noisy sitting room.

Of course the answer to the question was that dates were sometimes used as money in the market in Madina, and so if an unequal exchange of dates was permitted it would have opened the door for the money-lender to lend money on interest. It was because animals were not used as money that an unequal exchange of camels could be permitted.

When we concluded the discussion on money the members of the group had an endless list of other questions which even included a question on the origin and purpose of male circumcision in Islam, and the questions posed displayed an admirable thirst for knowledge of Islam amongst Muslims in Caracas.

Azizuddin had spoken to me the previous night about his nephew, Kayyum Alam, at whose home Maulana Ansari had stayed during his several visits to Caracas. Both Kayyum Alam and Azizuddin had left Suriname to establish their goldsmith trade in partnership in Trinidad and both had migrated to Caracas in 1947 because of the abundant supply of gold in Venezuela. And present in the gathering that Sunday night was Kayyum's widow, his son and grand-daughter. I was delighted to speak to the aged Begum Kayyum who reminded me that she and her late husband had visited Pakistan while I was a student and that they had met with me at that time. I, in turn, informed her that I had heard my teacher fondly and frequently mentioning her late husband's name.

Both Larisa and Meysaloum came to visit me on Monday and spent most of the morning with me. Larisa wanted to question me on Islam's response to the 'War on Terror'. She was working on a thesis on that subject for a university degree in International Relations. Fortunately, my studies in International Relations permitted me to respond comprehensively to her question. Meysaloum, on the other hand, wanted advice on institutions for the study of Islam. She also wanted advice on how local Muslims should proceed

with an effort to present to the Venezuelan people the viewpoint of Islam on critical issues connected to the war on Islam and oppression of Muslims in Palestine in particular. She complained that the most important local newspapers were owned by the Venezuelan Jewish community and were pro-Israel. They joined enthusiastically in the American sponsored so-called ‘war on terror’ and were consistently publishing news and articles that were hostile to Islam. She went on to point out that even those secular Arab scholars and writers who sought to support the cause of the Palestinian people in the local print media were also hostile to Islam.

I advised that the local Muslim community should seek to develop local writers who would write with a Venezuelan flavour. They should project the viewpoint of Islam in essays and news analysis that should be published as full-page paid ads in the important local newspapers. A similar effort should be made with the purchase of time in local radio and television stations.

Last Evening in Caracas

My last evening in Caracas was somewhat bizarre. All through the day Nadiya had been monitoring my blood pressure which had been rising since the previous day. She brought it under control before breakfast and then proceeded to give me a Venezuelan breakfast. Malcolm X used to take one meal a day. I take two – breakfast and a late afternoon meal. By the time I took my next meal at 3 pm so that I would be able to receive guests who were expected to arrive by 4, I began to feel the blood pressure rising again. I also began to feel sleepy and longed to take a little nap to try to bring the blood pressure down again in preparation for my journey to Buenos Aires that night. But before I could get in bed Br. Rafeeq arrived. He was an Afro-Venezuelan Professor who had lived in the United States for more than thirty years and then, upon his return to Venezuela some six years ago, he had converted to

Islam. He had attended the Sunday night discussion session and was deeply impressed by what I had to share with the gathering, and he had come back to spend my last hours in Caracas with me.

By the time we broke for *Salāt al-‘Asr* many more had arrived, including the former Vice Chancellor of a Turkish University who was a scholar of Islam. Fortunately for me the Turkish Professor was not aware of my presence in the home, and after *Salāt* he proceeded to lecture the gathering on the work for the cause of Islamic education that he and his group were doing all over South America. He took over the entire gathering from ‘Asr to Maghrib and left me speechless. Those who had come to say goodbye to me were also left speechless. But the lecture of the Turkish Professor gave me a chance to seek leave from the gathering and jump into bed for a little while. Sleep never came however.

After *Salāt al-Maghrib* the Turkish group left and so did many of the others. Nadiya checked my blood pressure and it was rising to an extent that provoked concern. As I sat with those who still remained with me I saw an absolutely astonishing sight. Two of the young women who had been in *Hijab* all through the evening were now bareheaded. As I said my goodbyes to the group I announced that I had a special *Duah* to make. They were all anxious to know about my special *Duah*. I said that I would pray that on my return trip to Caracas next year I would find that all the women present who were not in *Hijab* would have entered into *Hijab*. It was then time to depart for the airport and to say a sad farewell to Caracas.

During my week-long stay in Caracas my blood pressure reading began to rise and Nadiya had to keep on checking on the reading to the extent that she even checked it while I was on my way to the Caracas airport to take my flight to Buenos Aires. Although I suffered from severe headaches on that night-time flight, I did survive and arrived next morning without a wink of

sleep all night long. Not for the first time during my travels I had to perform my *Salāt* (i.e., *Salāt al-Fajr*) sitting on my airline seat while facing a direction other than that of the *Qiblah*. This was *Dajjāl's* victory. I believe it would be advisable for a Muslim to repeat every such *Salāt* as soon as the opportunity arises for him or her to face the *Qiblah*.

BUENOS AIRES - ARGENTINA

*T*his was my first visit to Argentina, and since I had no local contacts I was all on my own. My Malaysian Airlines flight to Johannesburg in South Africa was not scheduled to leave until 10 o'clock that night. There were no hotels at the airport and I had no intention of risking a taxi ride into the city to spend about 10 hours in a hotel room. I was thus forced to spend the entire weary day at the airport. I searched and found a good book on recent Argentine political history which I bought and settled down to read while nodding away between pages.

I was unaware of the fact that there was a Muslim prayer room (*Musalla*) in the airport, and so I performed my *Salāt* in the chapel. The security guard looked beside himself in confusion when I gently enquired of him "*from which direction did the sun rise?*" He must have mentally made the Catholic 'sign of the cross' while thanking the heavens I was not enquiring which direction was Washington. Only on my return trip through Buenos Aires, one year later, would I accidentally discover the *Musalla*. It was near the departure check-point behind the restaurant on the first floor of the terminal building.

I found the Buenos Aires airport to be almost completely occupied by people of European extract. There were very few indigenous Indian or African faces in the airport. This was a reflection of the wealth of the Europeans when compared with the poverty of the non-Europeans. It was the exploitative

system of economic and political dominance of European over non-European which held the whole of South America in its venomous grip for so long that accounted for the anti-capitalist anti-American wave that was sweeping South America. Venezuela's Hugo Chavez was riding the very crest of that wave.

My friends in Malaysian Airlines had very kindly sought and obtained a Business Class ticket for me, and so I was able to settle down in a very comfortable seat for the long flight to Johannesburg. Praise and thanks be to Allah Most High. The Argentine Spanish-speaking Jew who sat next to me on that flight may not have been that comfortable for he was not inclined to engage in any conversation with me during the entire flight. He stood up and said his prayers while standing, and proceeded to insist that he be served the *Kosher* meals that he ordered. I relaxed and comforted myself with the thought that an Israeli Mossad agent would never make such a public spectacle of himself while publicly proclaiming his Jewish identity. So I said my prayers, had my dinner, and went to sleep.

I love to fly with Malaysian Airlines because I am allowed to perform *Salāt* while standing and prostrating in a special enclosure in which the direction of *Qiblah* is constantly displayed on a screen. And that was how I performed my *Salāt al-Fajr* as morning dawned on the flight to Johannesburg.

JOHANNESBURG – SOUTH AFRICA

“Well, you may have a Tambo”, I muttered to myself, as the airline hostess welcomed us to the Oliver Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg. Oliver Tambo was, like Nelson Mandela, one of the leaders of the freedom struggle in South Africa. *“But we also have our Tambo in Trinidad”*. I smiled to myself as I reminisced about ‘*tupi-tambo*’, a local fruit in Trinidad.

I arrived safely in Johannesburg on Thursday March 1, and again, *Alhamdu lillah*, I had absolutely no problems with South African Immigration. My host in J'burg was someone who had met me for the first time during my last visit to that city in 2003. He was a very ardent Muslim who gave very serious thought indeed to the plight of Muslims in this age. He was intensely attracted to the message I delivered and had drawn quite close to me before I had left the city at that time.

Even while driving from Johannesburg's Oliver Tambo International Airport to the city one is promptly introduced to the distinctive history of South Africa that made it the stepping stone on which the State of Israel was built. Huge mounds of light-brown earth rise up at regular intervals as veritable hills - only to be flattened at the top. They represent the result of the mining for gold that seized the country after the Europeans colonized it. Indeed the African name for Johannesburg is 'Igoli', namely city of gold.

Johannesburg, which is the commercial capital of South Africa, is a sprawling city located at an altitude so high that one can even have some breathing problems. I had been to the city several times in the past and so the scenery was not new to me. Even so I could not help feeling intense depression as we passed by the African ghettos outside the city with hundreds of tiny huts that were built of galvanize sheets. It was certain that such so-called homes would be unbearably hot in the summer and similarly cold in the winter. Why did they not build African huts with mud walls and thatched roofs that would not only be very beautiful but would be cool in the summer and warm in the winter? I was informed that Africans looked down upon such huts as a symbol of a backward past and they shunned them while pursuing an effort to enter the modern age.

I was very tired indeed after having had little or no sleep for two consecutive nights, so when I reached my host's home I had lunch, said my

Salāt, went to sleep, and slept for until night-time. Later that night I spent quite some time talking with my host. His appetite for knowledge was insatiable. He conveyed to me the news that he had arranged for me to give a *Juma'ah* talk the next day at his neighbourhood *Masjid*.

Friday turned out to be a hectic day indeed. It began with my host driving me to the town of Lanasia, 45 minutes away from J'burg., to visit the Zakariah *Dar al-'Uloom*. The Principal was *Maulana Shabbir Saloogie*. I was amazed at the size of the *Dar al-Uloom* which, I was told, had as many as 700 students from some 70 different countries. The physical facilities were quite impressive and it was obvious that a lot of money had been spent in constructing such a extensive complex of buildings.

I almost wept with joy when I met *Maulana Shabbir* himself. I was meeting him of the first time in 40 years. He was a very playful fun-loving 14 year-old boy when he joined our hostel at the Aleemiyah Institute of Islam Studies in Karachi in 1966. He stayed with us for one year before moving on to do his memorization of the Qur'an at another institution. But we older students enjoyed having his company for that one year. *Maulana Shabbir* invited me to return the next day to the *Dar al-Uloom* and to address the students.

I was very pleased that *Maulana Shabbir* remembered Dr. Wahid Ali of Trinidad who had visited the Aleemiyah Institute in Karachi sometime in 1966-67 and delivered a few public lectures at the invitation of *Maulana Ansari*. During his stay in our hostel Dr. Ali had become quite fond of young *Shabbir*. He would probably be amazed to know that the young lad was now the head of an institution of higher Islamic learning with students hailing from so many different countries.

From the *Dar al-Uloom* I was taken on a visit to the Lanasia Islamic School. Again I was amazed at the beauty of the buildings and the remarkable cleanliness and tidiness of the school premises. It was a reflection of both the prosperity and the cultural sophistication of the Indian Muslim community which had built and maintained many such schools. The Principal and members of the staff knew about me from my previous visits to South Africa and we had a brief exchange of views on the serious situation that confronted the world of Islam today. In my previous visits I had visited and addressed students in about 20 Islamic schools and I was deeply impressed by the remarkable achievements of the South African Muslim community in the field of elementary and secondary education. My own community in Trinidad could benefit from studying what was achieved in South Africa. My only concern was that the Islamic schools were almost exclusively filled with Indian Muslim children and one could hardly see any African children. One can only hope for a tomorrow when that would change Insha Allah.

When I attended the *Salāt al-Jumu'ah* I was pleased to see that the neighbourhood *Masjid* was packed with a few hundred people. My 20-minute talk focused in the strange world in which we now lived and the explanation of that world that was given by *Nabi Muhammad (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam)*. I ended the talk by quoting the prophecy that a time would come when nothing would remain of Islam but the name, and nothing would remain of the Qur'an but the traces of the writing. At that time the *Masajid* (plural of *Masjid*) would be grand structures but devoid of guidance, and the scholars of Islam, who would be responsible for great *Fitnah*, would be the worst people beneath the sky. I shared with the audience my view that the great failure of the scholars of Islam would, perhaps, reside in their incapacity to see that the religion itself was being stolen by the enemies of Islam and that what they were so proudly holding on to as the religion was only the external shell. In addition, it could

also be the case that they would lack the courage to stand up and fearlessly respond to the awesome challenges posed by the enemies of Islam.

The *Juma'ah* talk was very well received. Indeed, as we were walking back home from the *Masjid* a car pulled up beside us and a young man emerged and came to me to declare how profoundly moved he was by the words that had been spoken. He was particularly pleased with my call for the scholars of Islam to become men with backbones of iron and steel rather than recycled paper.

Later that evening I was interviewed on the Islamic Radio station known as Channel Islam. Their broadcast reached many different countries and they were, perhaps, the most important Muslim-owned electronic media-house in South Africa. I had been interviewed by Channel Islam twice before, including an interview in 2001, just after 9/11. On this occasion they allotted 2 hours to the interview – the first hour was a direct one-on-one interview with my host while the second hour was devoted to a call-in program in which questions or comments were received by telephone or text messages. The discussion covered a wide range of subjects connected to the ‘Signs of the Last Day’ in the context of contemporary political and economic realities around the world. The interview generated such feedback from the listening audience that I was invited for a second interview later in the month. I was grateful for the opportunity in the Radio interview to advertise my three new books that were soon to be printed.

By the time I got into my bedroom it was past midnight. But I stayed up for another hour working on this Travelogue. Friday March 1 was truly a long long day, and it was also one week since I had left Trinidad.

My visit to *Dar al-Uloom Zakariah* in Lanasia to address staff and students, took place the next day. It seemed to me that most of the 700

students studying at the institution must have been present for the lecture. *Maulana* Shabbir sat beside me on my left, while a member of the teaching staff sat at my right. I used my one hour to introduce the students in as gentle and humorous a way as possible to the subject of ‘Islam and International Monetary Economics’. I had a suspicion that the subject was entirely new to the entire gathering, including the teaching staff. At least I had the attention of all the students for that one hour and I was able to impress upon *Maulana* Shabbir the need to introduce the subject into the curriculum of studies in the *Dar al-Uloom*. It seemed to me that the lecture was well received since I was invited to return to the *Dar al-Uloom* to give another lecture at that time (later in the year) when my extended lecture-tour of South Africa was to take place.

At the end of the lecture all the students came forward to shake hands with me and I was delighted to meet a few students from Guyana.

The next day, Sunday, was by far the most interesting day that I spent so far on my journey. I went for a long and fairly brisk morning walk and discovered something quite ominous. Back home in Trinidad I was accustomed to greeting African people on the streets, in the market-places, etc., and getting a friendly response. I would even tease them sometime by stopping and saying, “I did not hear you say wa ‘alaikum assalaam”! They would almost always respond to my greeting with a smile. But Johannesburg was different, and ominously so. As my host and I walked, I greeted Africans whom we encountered on our way. They all responded politely to my greeting, but never with a smile, and, in addition, some of them turned their heads away while responding to my greeting.

It was ominously clear to me that all was not well between the Indian community that had come from India and had prospered in South Africa, and the black Africans who had been so horribly oppressed during the years of European rule. At that time they were subjected to the lowest possible

economic, political and social status in their own land. Even after the struggle for liberation from white colonial rule had triumphed the hitherto politically disprevidledged African masses still remained at the mercy of their government for peanuts while the Indians remained prosperous.

I also found African men posted as security guards at several street corners. They had built small fires to keep themselves warm in the nippy J'burg nights and early mornings. My host explained that crime had reached alarming proportions and that the South African government had recently recognized it as the most serious problem facing the country.

The houses on both sides of the streets that we walked looked so well-built and well-kept that I felt that I was in an upper class neighbourhood. My host laughed! "This is middle class", he said, "the rich of this country live in palaces".

Later that morning, and at my request, we went to Soweto, the large sprawling African township outside of J'burg which had led the final stage of the struggle for liberation from European rule. Students had marched in protest in 1976 and the white government foolishly responded to their marches with deadly force. Some students were killed and the momentum was thus built which took the struggle to a stage that provoked extreme embarrassment for the European rulers of the world. My old friend, Sadruddeen, joined us for the trip. He and I were classmates when I studied at Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt, during the years 1963-64.

Sadruddeen knew Br. Malik who was the Ameer of all Muslim organizations located in Soweto, and he arranged for Malik to meet us in Soweto and to take us around the township. As I drove through Soweto I felt as if I was in Brooklyn, New York, or even Port of Spain, Trinidad. The first distinctive difference between Soweto and the rest of the country that I had

seen was that there were people walking all over Soweto. You could see them standing in groups or just moving around doing their ordinary errands. One got the feeling that the place was alive, naturally vibrant and human. There was nothing artificial, monotonous or mechanical about Soweto.

I saw no tin/galvanise shacks in Soweto. The houses were all small, with probably only two small bedrooms each. Even Nelson Mandela's house which was now a museum was also of the same size. My only unpleasant surprise in Soweto was to pass by Winnie Madela's castle of a house which was perched on a hill and was surrounded by high walls. It appeared to be the largest house in Soweto and was built the way a Saudi or Kuwaiti Embassy would be built, - forlorn and forbidding. Around that castle of a house were so many such small and dainty homes that the castle looked grotesquely out of place.

We stopped to visit the Hector Pieterse Museum which preserved the story of the black students' riots of 1976. It was a very moving experience to retrace that moment in history. There were huge photographs on some of the walls of the museum. They were actual photographs of events that had taken place at that time. Hector was himself a young African boy perhaps not yet a teenager, who had been shot and killed by the white South African police during the student protest-march. That one death sparked off a series of protests that dramatically caught the attention of the world and subjected the white-world-order to significant embarrassment. What made the visit to that museum even more painful for me was the realization that even though the Palestinian people were experiencing an even greater oppression than that experienced in Soweto, with several being killed every day, there appeared to be little public consciousness of that oppression and little interest in it. The evil mastermind who now controlled the world appeared to have achieved his greatest victory of all in his amazing capacity to divert mankind's attention from his wickedness by creating distractions that have the above effect.

We stopped to perform *Salāt* at a *Musalla* in Soweto. The *Musalla* turned out to be a room in a private residence that was rented from the Muslim owner. A *Musalla* is a small place where people can perform their daily prayers but in which there is no *Juma'ah* prayer. The fact that Malik lost his way while taking me to the *Musalla*, and had to use his cell phone to get directions, would give the reader some indication of the size of Soweto. The Imam who led us in *Salāt* was a young man recently graduated from *Dar al-Uloom Zakariah*. Our next stop was another Soweto Musalla, this time located in a room at the back of a Muslim-owned gas station. At this Musalla an old African man greeted us and complained that scholars of Islam visited South Africa regularly but hardly ever put their feet in Soweto. I promptly responded with the promise that upon my return to South Africa later in the year, my wife and I would spend a whole week with the Muslims of Soweto Insha Allah.

We passed by a fairly large Masjid which had been fire-bombed and part of the building still could not be used because of the damage caused by the bomb. Our next visit was to a location where an old Masjid had been demolished and a new Masjid with a modern utilitarian design that could have come straight out of Kuwait was under construction. A few wealthy Muslims had pledged the money needed to fund the construction work. We looked through the architectural plans of the Masjid and then offered a Duah for Allah's blessings on the project. Finally Malik took me to a complex of buildings that housed a Christian church, a residence for the Priest, etc., and informed me that the Sowetan Muslims were in the process of purchasing that property.

We spent quite some time in serious discussions while driving around Soweto. I found him to be learned, intelligent, articulate, and aware of issues facing Muslims today and I felt that the Muslims of Soweto had made a good choice of a leader. We discussed the books on *Sūrah al-Kahf* that I had written

and I urged him to study the *Sūrah*. At the moment his entire focus appeared to be directed towards developing the Muslim community within Soweto itself, but he did not seem to be aware of the fact that the degradation of society, the collapse of morals and ensuing mayhem, and the violence, rape, murder, kidnapping etc., that would overtake society when Riba-induced poverty drove the poor to desperation, could not be avoided. In other words, I tried to explain, we are on board a ship which was sinking, and *Sūrah al-Kahf* directed us to an eventual awareness that no one could prevent the ship from sinking. Hence the sensible and intelligent response to such a situation would be to get off the ship. That is precisely what the young men in *Sūrah al-Kahf* did when they abandoned their city and fled to a cave.

If Sowetan Muslims were to save their women and children from the anarchy and decadence that was coming, or even already here, they would have to relocate to the remote countryside where they would have to build Muslim Villages. Malik responded with the declaration that there was no land available even in the countryside. I suggested that he should take the initiative right there in Soweto to make a call for such constitutional reform as would permit the removal of the continuing injustice in which so much of the best land in the country remained in the hands of the former white rulers who had unjustly taken possession of the land from the African people by force. Malik approved entirely with that suggestion.

Monday March 6th was my last day in Johannesburg and we spent it in nearby Pretoria, the capital city of South Africa. A number of old friends had invited for lunch in Pretoria and upon my arrival there they immediately began to question me on events I anticipated in the near future that would affect the world of Islam. They had all read my book entitled ‘Jerusalem in the Qur’an’ and most of them agreed with the views presented in that book.

I shared with them the gist of my essay entitled “Will Israel attack Iran?” in which I anticipated an Israeli attack Iran. I was fairly certain that nuclear weapons would be used in that attack.

The basis for my view on the subject transcended the obvious military benefit to Israel that would accrue from the use of nuclear weapons. I was more impressed by the obvious political impact of Israel’s successful use of nuclear weapons in warfare and by the incapacity of the entire body of so-called nations of the world assembled in the United Nations Organisation to do anything to prevent such a nuclear war, or to punish such an aggressor. Such a successful Israeli nuclear war and subsequent successful defiance of the entire world, including a possible shutdown of the UN itself, would deliver to that country a status second to none in the world.

I felt that Israel would seize the opportunity of the war to either seize Iran’s oil and gas, or ensure that it would never again flow through any pipeline anywhere in that country. My view was that Israel, with support from the entire European world, would then seek to establish itself as dictator in control of the world’s major source of oil supplies, and that no one would get that oil unless they submitted to Israel’s terms.

In addition, I anticipated that an Israeli nuclear attack on Iran would immediately send oil prices to astronomical heights and that it would also cause a concomitant rise in the price of gold; and that such astronomical dual increases in prices would, in turn, trigger the long-anticipated collapse of the utterly fraudulent US dollar and, hence, the US economy. The road would then be clear for Israel to replace USA as the ruling State in the world.

One of my oldest colleagues in Pretoria differed with my analysis. He felt that Iran had the capacity to respond with nuclear weapons to an Israeli attack, and to even wipe Israel off the map. I brought the discussion of the subject to a

close with the remark that while we hoped for the best, we should also prepare for the worst.

On my return to J'burg my host and I discussed my forthcoming lecture-tour of South Africa and he advised that I spend the month of November in Durban and surrounding towns in Natal, the month of December in Cape Town, and the rest of my time in Soweto, J'burg., Pretoria and surrounding towns including towns all the way to Mafeking.

CAPE TOWN – SOUTH AFRICA

One of my students in Cape Town had succeeded where others had previously failed, in establishing a website for me, www.imranhosein.org, and what a phenomenal success he had achieved. It was now viewed by Muslims and non-Muslims around the world and I was receiving a steady stream of emails. The webmaster, Mogamat Abrahams, had accumulated sufficient funds from sales in Cape Town of DVDs of my lectures to buy round-trip tickets for me with a local airline. And so I flew from Johannesburg to Cape Town and then to Durban before returning to Johannesburg with tickets that cost a grand total of just US\$100.

My first stop was beautiful Cape Town, a city which I had visited on several previous occasions. Although I lived as a student in Geneva, Switzerland, from 1974 to 1979, and although Switzerland was surely blessed by Allah Most High with extraordinary natural beauty, I still considered Cape Town to be the most beautiful city I had ever seen. If ever I were to make a second home after my native Trinidad it would surely be Cape Town. The city has an indelible stamp of *Islām* printed on it by virtue of the large Indonesian Muslim population that was transported there by the Dutch colonial power three or four hundred years ago. The interaction of those Malay Muslims with

Muslims from India as well as from many parts of Africa has woven a fascinating mosaic that makes Cape Town's Muslim culture the most attractive of all in Southern Africa. Readers of this travelogue should try to visit beautiful Cape Town and experience the charm of its Muslim culture.

By the time I arrived in Cape Town the Cricket World Cup which was being hosted in the Caribbean for the first time had commenced. Many South Africans had traveled to the Caribbean to view the World Cup games, and it was quite intriguing to many left behind that I should leave the Caribbean on my year-long Islamic lecture-tour just when the Cricket World Cup was about to commence in my own back-yard. I explained my perception of these mega-sporting extravaganzas in cricket, soccer, Olympic Games, etc., to have been skillfully organized for the primary purpose of fostering addiction and of diverting attention from the ever-escalating oppression that the Judeo-Christian alliance was inflicting upon mankind. Even though I loved the game, and would enjoy watching a day's cricket once in a blue moon, I did not want to have my attention so diverted. And so I left the Caribbean before the cricket world cup could commence.

Mogamat arranged my stay in Cape Town at Shehnaaz Parkar's Guest House. It was quite an extraordinary sight to see a *Maulānā* sharing a small and well-kept Guest House with several Muslim girls who were attending university. They did not appear unduly uncomfortable because of my presence, and I survived the one week stay. The Guest House was located walking distance from a large *Masjid* and I was able to walk myself to the *Masjid* for the *Salāt al-Fajr*. March is still summertime in Cape Town and the weather is truly beautiful and a thing to be enjoyed. But I did need to protect myself with additional clothing while walking in the cool morning air to the *Masjid*.

I delivered the *Jumu'ah* talk a few days later at that huge *Masjid Habibiah* in Cape Town. *Hazrat* Sufi Sahib from India had established a name for himself more than a hundred years ago in successfully establishing a number of prominent *Masājid* in several South African cities. *Masjid Habibiah* was one of the most famous of those *Masājid*. A prominent Islamic school was located just next to the *Masjid* and the students all attended the *Salāt al-Zuhr* in the *Masjid*. An Islamic University was also located in the same compound with the *Masjid*.

On my first visit to Habibiah Masjid for the *Salāt al-Zuhr*. I joined in a *Salāt al-Janāzah* (i.e, Muslim funeral prayer). As soon as the *Salāt* was over large numbers of people started lining up to greet the bereaved male family members and to embrace them before moving on. It was a moving sight. Throughout my stay in Cape Town I was able to perform my *Salāt* at Habibiah Masjid. I marveled over the size of the congregation that stood for the daily prayers. The congregations usually comprised of a few hundred people. At no time was there ever less than a hundred. The *Salāt al-Jumu'ah* probably had a few thousands participating in it.

Later that evening visitors started arriving to greet me at the Shenaaz Parker Guest House until, at perhaps 10.30 pm., the last visitor forced me out of bed to spend some time with me. He was an enthusiastic young man who was absolutely delighted that I had arrived in his city.

Next morning, after Fajr prayers at Habibiah Masjid, I did get a chance to rest before a truly hectic day began. I was taken by Maulana Daud Sampson to a Madrassah located in a distant suburb of Cape Town close to the sea. There I met with the distinguished Islamic scholar, Maulana Ibrahim Adam, who had studied in Pakistan under the guidance of men such as Maulana Amin Ahsan Islahi. I had very great respect for Maulana Islahi. He was a scholar of exceptional courage and integrity. I was asked to address a gathering of some

seventy girl students whose ages ranged from 16 to 23. I spoke for more than an hour but they never saw me and I never saw them since, in typical Lahori Muslim culture, they remained behind a wooden partition. But I did hear them enjoying themselves laughing and some of the remarks I made. In fact I gave them a lot to think over in that lecture in which I attempted to explain some of the main aspects of the subject of ‘time’ and the ‘spiritual quest’ in Islam. Maulana Adam was roused to a state of significant reflection over the lecture. He then suggested to Maulana Daud that I be taken on a scenic drive alongside the sea. And so we set off for Simon’s Town.

Maulānā Daud, the middle-aged *Imām* of *Masjid al-Sabr* in Parkwood, Cape Town, is tall and athletically-built. I delivered two lectures on *Ribā* at his *Masjid*. And now here was I being taken on a lovely train ride to picturesque Simon’s Town. This coastal town was strategically located some miles along the coast from Cape Town harbor, and I enjoyed a train ride as beautiful as could be experienced anywhere else in the world. It was only later that I realized that Dr. Hayat had driven Aisha and I by car to Simon’s Town four years ago to enjoy a meal of fishburgers. However, the inland road by car was hardly as beautiful as the train ride alongside the sea.

On the way back to Cape Town *Maulānā* Daud surprised me by getting off the train before we had reached our stop. He announced that we would walk on a concrete walk-way built alongside the sea. As we walked along that walkway with seagulls flying all around us and the waves of the vast ocean melodiously lapping gently close to our feet, I was poetically transported to fairyland. In such a state one could soar with the seagulls and to dive down with the beams of sparkling sunlight as they penetrated the waves and danced with the foam. It is only in perfect silence that one could truly commune with the world of beauty, but the *Imām* never sensed that I had traveled to another

world and he just kept on asking a thousand and one questions. May Allah bless dear *Maulānā* Daūd. *Amīn!*

And that was not my only problem. The *Imām* had very long legs, and I was beside myself with difficulty in trying to keep up with him as he strode so briskly along an enchanting walkway that was meant for a dream of a walk.

I got back to my room at about 3.30 and later learnt to my sorrow that Shaikh Abdullah Hakeem Quick, who had moved from Toronto to Cape Town a few years ago, had come to see me and, not getting any response from me, had left. I guess that I must have been in the bathroom and did not hear his knock on the door.

That same Wednesday evening I lectured at Maulana Daud's Parkwood Masjid on the same subject of Riba. The turnout of people for a lecture that was announced only a few days previously was quite good. South African Muslims appeared to have far more interest in the subject of Riba, and a greater capacity to understand the subject than the Muslims of my own native island of Trinidad who displayed a regrettable apathy when I organized two seminars on the subject in that island two years ago.

On Thursday morning I visited the offices and studios of the 786 Islamic Radio station. My dear friend Fakhri Hassan greeted me and took me around their new offices to which they had relocated since my last visit. The radio station had a staff of about twenty who were housed in several rooms. One got the impression that they were well-organised. I saw Muslims women at work amongst the staff. Fakhri requested an interview from me to be broadcast on radio on his prime-time program. From the radio station I gate-crashed on the office of 'Muslim Views', a Muslim newspaper run by my dear friend, Fareed Syed. But he was absent from his office. Across the road from 'Muslim Views' we ran into Muhammad Groenewald, the head of the Cape Town

Branch of the Muslim Youth Movement of South Africa (MYM), and chatted with him about my impending visit to Durban and proposed meeting with the MYM officers at their headquarters.

It was then time to drive to the Dallas (Islamic) College that was established in Cape Town by the *Murabitoon* leader *Shaikh* Abdul Qadir al-Sufi. An invitation had kindly been extended for me to join the Director, staff and students of the college for lunch. Hasbullah, a young man of Singapore, had attended some my lectures in that country and had been inspired to join the Aleemiyah Institute of Islamic Studies in Karachi to pursue studies in Islam. But he wrote to me to express his disappointment in the Institute and he left after spending just a few weeks there. He then joined Dallas College and had been writing to me regularly for the last two years giving me information about his studies at the College. Hence by the time of my arrival at Dallas I already had some knowledge about the strength and weaknesses of the College. Unfortunately Hasbullah was away in Singapore and I did not meet with him when I was taken around the college. .

During my visit to Cape Town in October 2001 the 90-year-old *Shaikh* Abdul Qadir, who was from Scotland, had invited me to have lunch with him, and I remember the charming Andalusian atmosphere into which I was introduced as a carpet was laid out underneath a tree on the lawn at the back of his home. We sat on the carpet and had our meal in a setting as serene and as pleasant as life must have in Andalusia so many hundred years ago. This time around we all sat on simple long wooden benches for our meal. The Director, Prof. Dr. Abdul Baseer Ojemberrena of Spain, was a scholar of comparative literature. He introduced me to the staff and students and we then set about sampling the delicious meal. But it was the desert of preserved peaches in a caramel cream sauce and with a crumby cake at the bottom that caused a stir. I guess the students did not get such a desert often and so they helped

themselves to quite a few large helpings while I sat by sharing in their happiness. I asked if there were any students from Soweto and they pointed to one student. I went up to him to embrace him and that was the cue for a few cameras to be brought out. I suspected that the photos were taken for more reasons than merely recording the event of my visit. Perhaps Hasbullah had talking to them about me. I left Dallas College impressed with the effort that was being made to impart knowledge of Islam to students who were eager to learn.

Ghulam Muhiyuddin came to my room in the late afternoon to take me to his home for dinner. His father had been appointed by Maulana Ansari as head of the Halaqa as far back as 1961. Ghulam reminded me that when I made my first visit to South Africa in 1987 I had visited his home and met with his father. As I entered the home I saw a huge placard on the wall facing the front door. It was a blown-up copy of an essay that described Maulana Abdul Aleem Siddiqui. Then in the living room I saw photographs of *Maulana* Siddiqui, my teacher *Maulana* Ansari, and the son of *Maulana* Siddiqui, namely *Maulana* Shah Ahmad Noorani. It was very clear that this was a family that was devoted to the memory of those great departed scholars of Islam. Ghulam brought out albums with photographs in which I saw myself in his home standing with his now departed father in 1987.

After a delicious spicy Indian dinner (which later kept me awake all night) we walked over to the nearby *Habibiah Masjid* for *Salāt al-Maghrib*. I chose not to combine my *Salāt al-Isha* with my *Salāt al-Maghrib* because we were going to assemble after *Maghrib* in Ghulam's home to conduct the *Halaqa al-Zikr* and the members of the Halaqah would have been disappointed not to have me praying *Isha* with them. In fact most of the members of the *Halaqah* arrived closer to *Isha* time and when the Azan was called at *Habibia Masjid* (indicating that the prayer would commence in 15

minutes) I was informed that we would perform *Salāt al-Isha* right there in the house in order to save time. When we stood up for *Salāt* we numbered about 50 males. The females were in an adjoining room so I do not know their number.

The Halaqa al-Zikr or Spiritual Assembly was conducted in a very competent way and I enjoyed participating in it. The leader of the group had made some intelligent changes from the format we were used to in Karachi. We invoked the names of Allah Most High in conformity with the declaration made to that effect in the Qur'an itself. We recited from the Qur'an and we also prayed for peace and blessings on Prophet Muhammad (*sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam*). In addition we prayed for mercy and for blessings on so many of those spiritual guides who had passed away from this world.

Maulānā Abdul 'Aleem Siddiqui visited Cape Town in 1950 and it is reported that some 60,000 people came out to greet him. He made a formidable impact on the city, and that impact was reinforced by the subsequent visits of *Maulānā* Ansari in 1970 and 1972. Even before *Maulānā* Ansari made his first visit in 1970 he appointed Ghulam's father as a *Khalifa* in the Sufi spiritual order of which he was a *Shaikh*. He had since died, but his family had continued to hold the *Halaqah al-Zikr* at their home located just across the road from *Masjid Habībiah*. I participated in the *Halaqah* during my brief stay in Cape Town and delivered an address on the '*Strategic Significance of Islamic Spirituality*'. After that address I took the opportunity to share with the members of the *Halaqah* a plan that I held very dear to my heart.

My teacher, *Maulānā* Dr Ansari, had published, just before he died in 1974, his two-volume *magnum opus* entitled '*The Qur'anic Foundations and Structure of Muslim Society*'. I made an appeal to the members of the *Halaqah* for funds with which to pay the cost of putting the entire text of the book on a

computer file and then reformatting it. It could then be made available to the world on the internet. My estimate of the cost of such a job was approximately US\$1000. The members of the *Halaqah* promptly committed themselves to donate that sum.

It was while I was with the members of the *Halaqa* that I met with Ebrahim Ismail for the first time. This energetic young Muslim who never met with *Maulānā* Ansari, had established the www.fazlurrahmanansari.org website. I promised myself that the book would be placed on that website before any other.

When I got back to my room close to midnight I began to experience the aftermath of the spicy meal I had eaten, and since sleep was not possible, I just spent most of the rest of the night working on this Travelogue.

The next morning, Youm al-Juma'ah (Friday), I was able to get a little sleep after going to Habibiah Masjid for *Salāt al-Fajr* and then reciting *Sūrah al-Kahf*. After breakfast I visited *Shaikh* Abdul Hakeem Quick. When he was based in Toronto I was based in New York and our paths used to cross from time to time. He had now relocated in Cape Town and was spearheading an effort of D'awah, i.e., the preaching of Islam, in the African continent. We spent almost two hours in an earnest and mutually valuable exchange of views on several important subjects. I always enjoy having a chance to meet with him and to profit from such an exchange of views.

When I arrived at the *Masjid* on the day of *Jumu'ah* I was delighted to meet Sayed Abdul Quddus Uthmany (*rahimahullah*). We were classmates in 1965-66 at the Aleemiyah Institute of Islamic Studies, but he had left the Institute to devote himself exclusively to studies at the University of Karachi. We were very old friends. His father, the late Zubair Othmany, was a dear friend of Maulana Ansari. Zubair sent two of his sons, Abdul Quddus and

Abdur Rahman, to study Islam in Karachi in 1964. That same year I also arrived in Karachi from Cairo. Not only did both Abdul Quddus and Abdur Rahman become my classmates when we began our first years studies at the Aleemiyah Institute of Islamic Studies in September 1964, but we all slept in the same room of the hostel building. I always marveled at the way they both lived with me in that room. They had grown up in an Islamic environment in Cape Town, and in a Muslim family, which had preserved so much of Islamic culture that we had lost in my home land and my family. I benefited from living with them and observing how they lived. I imitated them and in the process began to acquire parts of Islamic culture I never previously had in life while growing up in Trinidad. Unfortunately they left Aleemiyah after a while and I lost them both as my classmates.

I had learnt some time last year that Abdul Quddus had suffered a stroke and my heart went out to him as I saw him standing and clutching a walking stick that was strapped to his arm. It was quite painful for me to see my dear friend and beloved brother hobbling with a walking stick. We sat on a bench beside the *Masjid* and chatted for half-an-hour while fondly reminiscing of times gone by. I would never meet him again. Four months later Allah Most High would call him away from this world. May Allah Most Kind have mercy on his soul and bless him with *Jannah. Amīn!*

I chose as my topic for my talk prior to the *Salāt al-Jumu'ah* 'Signs of the Last Day' and argued the necessity to interpret some signs symbolically. I ended with the Hadith concerning 'a mountain of gold' that would be uncovered by the river Euphrates and that mankind would fight for that gold and 99 out of every 100 would be killed. I recognized the mountain of gold to symbolically represent oil, and argued that such a war could not be fought with conventional weapons. I therefore argued that the Hadith was anticipating an Israeli nuclear attack on Iran.

The Imam of the Masjid, Maulana Qutbuddeen, invited me to have lunch with him at his home after *Salāt al-Jumu'ah*. Maulana had studied Islam at Dar al-Uloom Nadwatul Ulama in Lucknow, India, after which he pursued further studies at al-Azhar University in Cairo and at the Islamic University in Madina. In his wisdom he refrained from engaging me in any serious discussions over lunch, and as a consequence I was able to enjoy a simple yet delicious meal. Sitting around the table with me was a visitor from Gabarone in Botswana who had attended my lectures in that city when last I visited in four years ago,

Later that afternoon I spend a little time at the wedding reception of Sadruddeen's daughter. He had flown down from J'burg for the event and he managed to make contact with me to invite me. As in Trinidad and Karachi, so too in Cape Town, there was such a relaxed atmosphere at the wedding reception that women's Hijab were few and far between.

I lectured that night at the Kroomboom *Sunni Masjid* on 'Appearance and Reality in the age of *Dajjal*' and, in this connection, embarked on a fairly detailed analysis of the story of *Musa* and *Khidr* ('*alaihima al-Salaam*') in *Sūrah al-Kahf* of the Qur'an. Although the lecture had been arranged only two days previously we yet had an audience of, perhaps, more than a hundred, i.e., counting both males and females. A man came up to me after the lecture to warmly embrace with a broad smile on his face. I looked at him and said, "You look familiar". He replied, "I am Abdul Ghaffoor, the taxi driver who used to pick you up every morning to take you to the *Masjid* for *Salāt*". I gave him a great hug - for the memories of that month I spent in Cape Town four years ago came flooding back to me. I was staying all by myself in a house in Rondebosch East section of Cape Town, and he offered to pass with his car to take me to the *Masjid* every morning for *Salāt*. We used to go to a different

Masjid every morning, and that included the *Masjid* in which I had just lectured but had not recognized.

On Saturday morning, just when the *Salāt al-Fajr* was completed and was about to get up and leave, I felt a gentle tap on my shoulder. A brother asked whether I could sit with a group in a corner of the *Masjid* for a while. The members of the group had some questions to ask me. My reference to *Dajjal* in my *Juma'ah Khutbah* had excited them and stimulated their appetite. They wanted to know more about the subject. So I sat with them in a quiet corner and never got up until an hour later. I had to present to them the evidence which supported my claim that the release of *Dajjal*, as well as of Gog and Magog had already taken place. In particular, they wanted a response from me concerning the contradiction involved between the *Hadith* in *Sahih Muslim*, which clearly seems to indicate that the release of Gog and Magog would take place only after the return of Jesus (*'alaihi al-Salaam*). I give praise and thanks to Allah that my arguments convinced every member of the group.

I delivered a follow-up lecture on *Riba* at the Parkwood Masjid after *Salāt al-'Asr* and by *Maghrib* I had completed a fairly comprehensive treatment of the subject. The audience comprised about 100 people and they had several questions to pose upon the completion of the lecture. One poor fellow was employed by a bank and did not know that the curse of the Prophet was upon him. Another member of the audience who had been sitting quite close to me as I delivered the lecture, came up to me to inform me that he was a graduate of al-Azhar University (in Cairo). He had some questions that he wanted to ask privately, and requested my email address.

Even though I had delivered a very powerful denunciation of the so-called Murabaha transactions of Islamic banks I did not face a single dissenting opinion from the audience. In fact members of the audience seem

more concerned about finding ways and means for the lectures I had delivered at that Masjid to reach the scholars and the students of Islam in addition, of course, to the general Muslim community.

We ended the session before the time of *Salāt al-Maghrib* thus giving me time to drive over to the other Masjid where the Murabitoon were to be holding their Halaqa al-Zikr. We reached that Masjid in up-scale Constantia in time to join the *Salāt al-Maghrib*, but after the *Salāt* we learnt to our dismay that the Halaqah al-Zikr was scheduled to take place only after the Isha prayer. I then decided to call it a day and to return to Masjid Habibia for *Salāt al-Isha*. I noticed that the Masjid had a larger number of people present for *Salāt* than the already large number that I was accustomed to seeing. I also noticed that a significant number of them were young boys. They had all come on Saturday night to join in a different kind of Saturday-night-fever, namely, a Halaqa al-Zikr that would last until 11 pm. That late hour would have been too late for me, so after *Salāt* I decided to return home. My companion for the afternoon and evening, Abu Bakr, invited me to join him in a Pakistani restaurant for a meal of spicy chicken tikka. I politely declined. One sleepless night was enough. I did not want to risk a second.

Sunday March 12th, was perhaps, the most restful and peaceful day I have had so far on this journey. I really enjoyed being alone and having a chance to relax and rest. I had gone to the Masjid in the morning for *Salāt* and, after the *Salāt*, since there was no tap on my shoulder, I assumed that the group which sat in a corner of the Masjid did not need me. So I made my way to the exit and as I was about to put on my shoes a medical doctor who was a member of group came running to me and appealed to me to share my knowledge with the group. I sat down with them and did not get up until one hour later. I explained the subject of ‘religious symbolism’ and, in that connection, interpreted and explained several Ahadith concerning Dajjal.

After the *Salāt al-Zuhr* I was invited by Abu Bakr to have lunch with him at his home. After that I was gloriously free until 7 pm when we left for my lecture at Masjid al-Furqan in a place called Islamia. Shaikh Abdul Hakeem Quick introduced me to the gathering and I proceeded to explain the passage of the Qur'an in *Sūrah al-Kahf* which dealt with the subject of *Dhūl Qarnain*. That passage of the Qur'an introduced the subject of Gog and Magog. The lecture attracted an audience of about 100 people which was not bad considering the fact that it had been arranged only days earlier and that there was very little publicity. As soon as I completed the lecture and sat down in preparation for the *Salāt al-Eid*, a Polish student of mine who lived in Sydney, Australia, and who had gone with his family to Yemen to study Arabic, came up to me and warmly embraced me. Malik Samulski had made a brave attempt to establish a website for me. It was named www.onejamaat.com and it functioned for about two years. He had his handsome 9-year-old son with him and they both accompanied me back to my room from the Masjid and we spent a little time together. He had been the subject of an attack in Yemen connected with the evil war on Islam, and although he had to leave the country his spirit was still high. Alhamdu lillah.

On Monday morning Abu Bakr and I accompanied Mahdi Krael to take a look at the apartment that had been offered for Aisha and I to use upon our return to Cape Town to spend the entire month of December 2007. The apartment was located in a newly built complex of apartment buildings and it was quite beautiful. I was happy to accept the kind offer.

We then visited the offices of the Muslim Judicial Council in Cape Town. Maulana Ihsaan Hendricks was the newly elected President of the MJC and we had known each other for the last six years. He was a graduate of the Dar al-'Uloom Nadwatul 'Ulama in Lucknow, India, and had grown into a formidable scholar of Islam. We had last met four years ago when he arranged

for me to lecture on the topic of ‘Peace and Reconciliation in Islam’ in a Masjid in old Cape Town. That topic had been selected because the South African government’s Peace and Reconciliation Commission had just completed their difficult task of attempting to heal the wounds of Apartheid and of European colonial rule over the country. During that time the country had been sucked dry of most of its diamonds and gold which was then sold to amass the kind of wealth with which the Zionist Movement could finance their ‘hook or crook’ struggle to liberate the Holy Land from benevolent Muslim rule, bring the oriental Jewish people (Banu Israil) back to the Holy Land, restore a State of Israel in the Holy Land, and eventually deliver to Israel the status of Ruling State in the world.

I offered, in that lecture, a comparative analysis of the methods of reconciliation employed by Islam and by the South African Commission. Islam insisted on peace with justice. The Commission settled for a sham ‘peace and reconciliation’ in which the native African people of South Africa still remained unjustly deprived of most of the fertile land and wealth of their own country. I argued that the sham ‘peace and reconciliation’ that the Commission offered was sure to be rejected within 10 – 15 years, and that would eventually provoke a black power revolution in the country.

Maulana Ihsaan had presided over that lecture and we had not met since then. I could not meet with him on this visit to the MJC’s offices because he was on a visit to Durban. And so I met with the Secretary-General, Maulana Abdul Kareem Ali. We discussed my proposed lecture-tour for December and my desire that MJC should coordinate the program of activities for the lecture-tour.

I delivered my last public lecture in Cape Town on Monday night at the Husami Masjid in a place called Cravenby Estate. The Imam, Shaikh Riad Fataar, was a graduate of Al-Azhar University in Egypt. Those who welcomed

me to the Masjid reminded me that I had spoken once before at the Masjid on the occasion of *Salāt al-Jumu'ah*. But I had no recollection whatsoever of that previous visit. At the request of some of those who were close to me in Cape Town I spoke on the subject of 'The Islamic Spiritual Quest' while describing and analyzing the famous dramatic appearance of Angel Gabriel in the Masjid in Madina. He had come in the form of a human being and had posed five questions to the blessed Prophet (*sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam*). The one-hour lecture was recorded on a newly purchased video recorder and Abu Bakr found the instrument to be still so strange that the first few minutes of the lecture were not recorded.

On Tuesday March 13th., my last day in Cape Town, I sat with the group in the corner of Masjid Habibia after the *Salāt al-Fajr* and struggled to quench their enormous thirst for knowledge of the subject of 'Signs of the Last Day'. In order to attempt to explain the Hadith pertaining to Dajjal's life on earth of 40 days (a day like a year, a day like a month, a day like a week, and all his days, i.e., all the rest of his days like your days) I had to offer an explanation of the subject of 'time' in the Qur'an. At the end of the talk the entire group expressed their happiness to learn that I had succeeded in obtaining a place to stay when I return to Cape Town to spend the entire month of December Insha Allah. We then all rose to perform *Salāt al-Ishrāq* and then we bade sad farewell to each other. My flight the next day to Durban was so early in the morning that I would have to perform *Salāt al-Fajr* at the airport.

After a stay of eight days in Cape Town I was able to make at least some preparations for my month-long lecture-tour of my favorite city which was to take place on my return trip. Most important of all was the success in getting accommodation for my wife and myself. Mahdi Krael got someone to offer a fully-furnished newly-built three bedroom apartment. Mahdi is an electrical engineer who has devoted considerable time and effort to propagating the

teachings of *Maulānā* Dr. Fadlur Rahman Ansari. His love for my teacher is so great that one can actually discern some resemblance with Dr. Ansari. Mahdi had collaborated with the distinguished Capetonian Islamic scholar, Dr Yaseen Mohamad, in successfully transcribing, compiling, editing and publishing under the title '*Islām to the Modern Mind*' the entire text of all of Dr Ansari's public lectures delivered in South Africa during his historic lecture-tours of 1970 and 1972. After accomplishing that great achievement Dr Yaseen Mohamad then went on to do the same with lectures of *Maulānā* 'Abdul 'Aleem Siddiqui that were recorded during his lecture-tour of 1950. He published them under the title "*The Roving Ambassador of Peace*".

DURBAN – SOUTH AFRICA

My next stop was historic Durban, a city that came into being because the Dutch settlers in the area of Cape Town were unwilling to submit to British rule after Britain had conquered the Cape. Durban is a bustling cosmopolitan city that brings so many peoples and cultures together that the South African government has, time and again chosen that city for hosting major international conferences. The predominant Zulu tribe of Natal rub shoulders in Durban with the large Indian community that migrated from India. Some of the migrants from India, like Mualana Mukhtar Siddiqui, brother of Maulana Abdul Aleem Siddiqui, were scholars of Islam, but most Indian migrants came as businessmen.

My first visit to Durban took place in October 1987 when I was still the Principal of the Aleemiyah Institute of Islamic Studies. I had traveled to South Africa, then an *Apartheid* State, to participate in an Islamic Conference jointly organized by the Muslim Institute for Research and Planning in London and the South African Islamic Academy. My lecture at the conference which was held in the Muslim township of Laudium in Pretoria, was entitled '*Islām and*

the United Nations Organization'. After the Conference was over I was taken on a whirlwind tour of the country delivering public lectures during one day and one night visits to Cape Town, Pt Elizabeth, Durban and Johannesburg.

I had adamantly insisted at the time, despite all the pleadings from so many, that I could not possibly stay in the country for a period longer than one week. This was because I had bought tickets for my cricket-crazy 11-year-old son, Mujahid, and myself to see one day's cricket of the England-Pakistan test match that was about to commence in Karachi. Of course I could not make mention of this to anyone.

Allah Most High was not at all impressed by my casual devotion to the mission of *Islām* and decided to punish me. On my return to Karachi from my trip to South Africa I was stopped at the Karachi airport by health inspectors who demanded my yellow fever certificate. Since I had none I was taken into a one-week long quarantine during which time I experienced every possible color of fever other than yellow – since both my son and I missed the test match.

I was again a guest at the home of the Indian businessman, Musa Parak, in his house in Reservoir Hills section of Durban. Not only did he have a personal bond with *Maulānā* Abdul Aleem Siddiqui, having traveled with him on the same ship, but his bond with *Maulānā* Ansari was equally strong since *Maulānā* was a guest at his home on both occasions that he visited Durban.

He had a very big and very comfortable home on a hill overlooking Durban. In the daytime one could see the sea from the back of his house, and in the night-time the (perhaps) millions of beautiful lights of Durban stretched far into the distance until they ended at the coast. I first stayed at this home in 1987 when I made my first visit to South Africa, and on every subsequent visit I was also a guest at this very home. My teacher, Maulana Ansari, also stayed

at that very home during his second and last visit to South Africa in 1972. Indeed I was sleeping in the same room in which he slept.

Within hours of my arrival at Musa Parak's home a car arrived to take me to the suburban town of Verulam. That town was made famous by its most outstanding resident, the late Ahmad Deedat. I was taken on a visit to the Verulam Islamic Institute for Girls. The Institute was established exclusively for girls and had attracted mostly teenaged girls, both Muslim and non-Muslim, from many surrounding countries in addition to many parts of South Africa itself. All the girls were resident at the Institute but while some of them attended High School away from the Institute and then evening classes at the Institute, the others were full-time students at the Institute. Those who were there when I arrived were nearly all African. The Principal, Shaikh Ramadan of Sudan, had invited me to address the students five years ago in 2002 when the Islamic Medical Association of South Africa had invited me to deliver the feature address at their annual convention held in Durban. And now, five years later, Shaikh Ramadan again invited me to visit the Institute and to address the girls.

Unfortunately I did not get the time, after leaving the Institute, to visit the grave in Verulam of Ahmad Deedat who had died about one year previously.

That night there must have been a dozen people attending dinner at Musa Paraks home. After dinner we had an interesting discussion-session which lasted until late at night. One of the guests, who was a fan of mine, wanted me to explain certain aspects of the subject of Dajjal the False Messiah.

Musa Parak's had a surprise for me. He took me with his wife and several family members on a long drive (an hour and a half from Durban) to a big farm he had just bought. There was a sprawling 12 bedroom guest house perched on a hilltop on the farm. He even had some horses and a lake on the

farm. There were picture-perfect undulating hills and dales on all sides of the farmhouse. Even though it was the month of March, and hence summer, that hilltop farm was chilly and I was only too happy to be bathed with warm sunshine.

While we were at the farm a special visitor arrived to greet me. Dr Abul Fadl Mohsin Ebrahim from Seychelles had studied with me at the Aleemiyah Institute of Islamic Studies. We had become dear friends. After graduation from Aleemiyah he had gone to Al-Azhar University in Cairo to read for a Bachelor's degree in Arabic, after which he went to Temple University in Philadelphia where he read for his PhD under the famous scholar of *Islām*, the late Professor Ismail Faruqi. Mohsin was now one of the most famous scholars of *Islām* in the world specializing in Islamic Medical Ethics. He had also emerged as a writer with several successful books to his credit.

A little later Mohsin's daughter, Huda, joined us. She had been married since my last visit and she was now the mother of a very handsome baby-boy. She came to the farm with her husband so that Uncle Imran could see the baby. I love babies, and I delighted in playing with Huda's baby.

After we returned to Durban I got down to the important work of meeting with officers of the Muslim Youth Movement (MYM) of South Africa which was based in Durban. *Maulānā* Ansari had created the MYM during his South African lecture-tour of 1970, and by 1972 MYM had grown sufficiently to host his second and last lecture-tour of South Africa.

MYM had hosted me on my previous visits to Durban and had done the very important work for me in the past of receiving shipments of my books from Malaysia and storing and distributing them. On this occasion as well MYM declared itself ready to assist me.

Across the street from MYM's office on Durban's Grey Street was the Grey Street *Masjid*, reputed to be the largest *Masjid* in the Southern hemisphere. Grey Street is an impressive sight on the day of *Jumu'ah*. The street is very wide, with about three lanes in each direction. On the day of *Jumu'ah* several lanes of the Street are closed to traffic so that cars can be parked on the closed-off lanes. This facility had been granted to Muslims even in the time of white *Apartheid* rule.

I had delivered the *Jumu'ah* talk at this *Masjid* on several occasions in the past, and on this brief visit as well I was invited to give the *Jumu'ah* talk before a congregation numbering some 5000 Muslims. They have a tradition at this *Masjid* of draping special guests with a shawl around the shoulders. And they have done that to me every time I spoke at that *Masjid*.

I love to walk the block around Grey Street and mingle with the crowds that constantly fill the sidewalks. It reminds me of downtown Port of Spain in my own native island of Trinidad. Durban's bustling sidewalks around Grey Street look distinctly African and Zulu. The sidewalk venders are all African, but nearly all the shops and business places are owned by Indian Muslims – just as in Port of Spain they are owned by Arab Christians from Syria and Lebanon.

A magnificent display of abundant fruits greet you on those sidewalks - delicious juicy lychees which grow in abundance in the countryside around Durban, and lovely locally-grown apricots, peaches, pears, apples, bananas, pineapples, etc. Cape Town boasts, in addition, of locally-grown grapes.

The MYM Secretary-General, Ibrahim Bufelo, and his assistant, Asif, were old friends of mine. And we were delighted to meet each other again after a gap of four years. We devoted some time to discussing my proposed lecture-tour of Durban and the entire province of Natal later in the year. Then

we went on to discuss the politics and economy of South Africa. Ibrahim was particularly disturbed over the fact that the Apartheid regime had cleverly hamstrung the present black government by running up an enormous national debt before they handed over government to the black majority. Nelson Mandela had further complicated the situation by declaring his government's intention to honour that debt complete with all the interest payments.

As a consequence a considerable part of the South African budget during the last 12-13 years of African rule over the country had to be spent on servicing that debt. The government found itself indeed hamstrung by those payments on the national debt and could not deliver to the poor African masses the kind of improvement of the quality of life they expected from their own government.

I was invited by my host, Musa Parak, to join him for lunch and to meet with Akbar Muhammad who was one of Louis Farrakhan's aides. He was in Durban on an invitation extended by the Islamic Propagation Council International (IPCI). It was a fairly uncomfortable moment for me since I loved Malcolm X, and Farrakhan had publicly boasted after Malcolm's assassination that "he was a traitor to his people and we have dealt with him the way we deal with traitors."

Our conversation quickly turned to Trinidad and he began commenting on Imam Yaseen Abu Bakr and his politics. The Imam (of the Jamaat al-Muslimeen) had made a deal with the major Indian-based political party, the United National Congress, but when that Party won power the UNC government quickly discarded him. He then went on to make a deal with the African-based People's National Movement that involved a commitment on their part to write-off a debt his *Jamāt* had to the State. In exchange for that favor, the *Jamāt* committed itself to deliver political support to the PNM in the

national elections. He confirmed in a sworn affidavit that he made this agreement.

The *Imām* and his *Jamāt* faithfully fulfilled their obligations under that corrupt and immoral agreement and, as a consequence, the PNM won the elections. When they took over the reins of government, however, the PNM also abandoned their agreement with the Imam.

I remarked over lunch that there was a world of difference between the politics of integrity and the politics of opportunism, and that Malcolm X not only recognized the difference between the two, but consistently and firmly adhered to the politics of integrity. I viewed Farrakhan and his politics quite differently from Malcolm who was my hero.

There was a moment of great sadness in Durban when I was taken to the grave of *Maulānā* Dr Abbas Qasim. He studied with me at the Aleemiyah Institute of Islamic Studies and, after graduation, had devoted the rest of his life to serving the mission of *Islām* in his native Durban. He was famous amongst us as the only student who studiously and meticulously imitated *Maulānā* Ansari in his dress. Shy as a youth, and just as shy as a man, Abbas was the *Imām* for many years at Durban's Sparks Road *Sunni Masjid*. He had just completed his PhD from the University of Durban when Allah Most High chose to call him away from this world. May Allah Most High bless dear Abbas, and have mercy on his soul. *Āmīn!*

Mūsa Pārak took me late that afternoon to visit a white Canadian Roman Catholic priest who had converted to Islam and had gone on to study Islam at *Dār al-'Ulūm* Newcastle. He studied under the venerable *Maulānā* Seema and graduated from the *Dār al-'Ulūm* and was now known as *Maulānā* Jamāluddīn. The Vatican had sent him to Durban to debate Ahmad Deedat and attempt to silence him. Instead, he converted to Islam. He had recently lost a

leg because of gangrene and was resident in an Islamic Home for the Aged where he was confined to a bed. I delighted in meeting with him and in observing with a sense of wonder his very humble and polite demeanor and very refined manners. We chatted for a while until the conversation turned to *Sūrah al-Kahf* - which he declared to be his favorite *Sūrah* of the Qur'an. By the time I parted from him he had almost be drawn to tears.

Later that evening I had the joy of meeting my old colleague at Aleemiyah Institute of Islamic Studies, Muhammad Ali Khan. He invited Mohsin and I for dinner at his home and we shared a few happy hours reminiscing over our student days. While I was at Ali's home having dinner the first drops of rain starting falling. It was still drizzling when we started our drive back home, but as we approached Reservoir Hills I noticed that the drizzle was getting a bit heavier. It was, perhaps, about an hour later that I heard the absolutely ferocious thunder-clap that seemed to rock the house. Since I was accustomed to rain-storms thunder and lightening in the Caribbean, I went to sleep and slept straight through one of the most ferocious rain-storms ever to strike Durban. Even hail-stones fell that night and at the end of it all the city counted a few dead and many injured.

On Friday March 16th I paid a visit to the IPCI offices in Durban and met and discussed with the Secretary-General and his staff my proposed lecture-tour of November 2007 when I planned to launch my three new books.

Later I delivered a *Juma'ah* sermon at the large and historic *Juma'ah Masjid* located on Grey Street in the very heart of downtown Durban. I had delivered the *Juma'ah* sermon there at least twice before on previous visits to Durban. My sermon dwelt on the strange character of the world today and the fact that it grows stranger every day. War on Islam was approaching its climax and it was time that Muslims turned to the Qur'an and to Prophet Muhammad (*sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam*) to understand the reality of the world today.

At the end of the *Salāt* we were required to stand and sing the *Salām* to Prophet Muhammad (*sallallahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*).. I disagreed with this newly-instituted practice of singing the *Salām* after the *Salāt* on the day of Juma’ah. I felt that the person of the blessed Prophet was being used to entrench sectarian divisions within the Muslim community. I felt that the practice of standing and singing the *Salām* ought to be confined to private rather than public occasions. I hope and pray that this travelogue may be a means through which my views on this subject may reach the wider public.

As we left the *Masjid* after the *Salāt al-Juma’ah* Mohsin suggested that we go to a Pakistani restaurant to have some lunch. The Pakistani Naan is truly delicious when it is baked in an earthen oven. We ordered Naan and Korma as well as Chicken Biryani. The food was delicious but, as usual for me, it was too highly spiced and I suffered later from heartburn.

Later that evening Mohsin came to take me to the World Assembly of Muslim Youth where I addressed a group of students. I took the subject that was assigned to me, i.e., ‘Youth and Technology’, and I expanded it until it eventually became ‘An Islamic Response to the Modern Scientific and Technological Revolution’. There were no questions at the end of the talk and I felt that the youth were more interested in getting back home since it was already late at night.

PRETORIA/LAUDIUM – SOUTH AFRICA

ƒ flew back to Johannesburg from Durban and promptly traveled to Laudium in Pretoria for lunch and discussions with the businessmen Kalla brothers – Ishmael and Haroon. Their father had been an old and dear friend of *Maulānā* Ansari who stayed at their family home during both his visits to Pretoria. They were very old friends of mine from the time of my very first

visit to South Africa 20 years earlier. We had also attended several Islamic conferences together in London during the years when I was a student in Geneva. Their family cosmetics business was the largest Muslim-owned business in South Africa, employing some 1500 people. The next day, Sunday March 18th, I flew back to Johannesburg. My old friend, Sadruddin, who had been my classmate at Al-Azhar University in 1963-64, came to have lunch with me. He even accompanied me in the late afternoon as we drove to Lanasia for my second interview with the Radio station Cahnnel Islam. We stopped at Masjid Omar Farooq in Lanasia to perform our *Salāt al-Maghrib* and I marveled over the almost 1000 strong attendance for that *Salāt*. Even while I regretted that they were almost all Indian Muslims yet I also had to admire the devotion to their religion that characterised the Indian Muslim community.

The interview took place between 8 and 10 pm and dwelt mainly on Surah al-Kahf of the Qur'an and its relationship with the modern age. Some callers called in with questions or comments while others communicated through text messages. The moderator questioned me about the subject of 'time' in Surah al-Kahf. I responded by pointing out that Allah Most High had Himself explained in the Surah the reason why He had put the young men to sleep for three hundred years and then awakened them from their long sleep. He explained that He wanted to see whether any of them would have been able to determine the length of 'time' they had tarried in the cave. The fact that one of them responded with an answer of 'a day or part of a day' indicated that the normal biological growth of 300 years worth of finger-nails, beards, hair on head etc., which should have occurred, did not occur. There were no externally visible signs of the biological process of ageing that should have occurred. The implication that emerged from this event was that the young men's bodies were simultaneously in this biological world of space and time (because they were rolling from side to side as the sunlight entered the cave mornings and

evenings) as well as in another world of non-biological time in which they did not age over time. The story not only introduced the concept of multi-dimensional time but, in addition, provided evidence that someone could exist simultaneously in different dimensions of time.

A caller called in to protest that he had never ever heard from any scholar of Islam that the young men's beards, finger-nails, hair on their heads etc., had grown very long while they were asleep in the cave for three hundred years. I had to patiently explain to him that he had misunderstood what I had said, and then proceed to explain the event all over again. What I could not say to him was that it was also possible that Satan had intervened to ensure that he misunderstood what had been said. We requested Channel Islam for tape recordings of both interviews so that both interviews could be placed on my website.

On Monday morning I had my last interview – this time with an Islamic satellite television channel, ITV. The Muslim Sister who interviewed me was well read and articulate. She had emerged from her university studies with a number of degrees to her credit. This included a graduate degree in political science. She had also taught Arabic and Islamic studies in a *Madrasah* for many years.

The interview focused on the 'Signs of the Last Day' and I managed to steer my answers towards the Holy Land and to the political signs that had appeared and were soon to appear. Unlike the previous night's session on radio, this TV interview had no time reserved for call-in questions or comments. As a result we were able to cover a larger range of topics connected to the subject of Signs of the Last Day.

After a brief discussion on arrangements for my lecture-tour of South Africa to take place at a later date, our discussions soon turned to politics as

we debated our different views on the likelihood of an attack on Iran. Ishmael is a thinker and I delight in engaging him in discussion because of his fiercely independent mind and the originality of his thought.

Almost one month had passed since I left my home in Trinidad and I was already beginning to feel the effects of travel as I boarded the Malaysian Airlines flight in Johannesburg bound for Malaysia.

KUALA LUMPUR - MALAYSIA

Kuala Lumpur, fondly known as KL, is a very modern beautiful and well-kept city, adorned with lush greenery and well-manicured ornamental plants. The city is located in the Klang Valley that is surrounded on all sides by mountains and, as a consequence, receives more rainfall than the rest of Malaysia.

I was very comfortable in this city because I had so many friends and students who were constantly around to assist me in every way possible. In addition, every time I visited, Allah Most Kind would send me new students and friends. This visit would prove to be just as fertile as previous visits.

Since KL was usually my base from which I would travel to other countries I had to stay there for long periods of time. I had finally decided to solve the problem of long-term accommodation by staying in a hotel. My first shock on arrival in KL on March 20th was the tremendous increase in price of a hotel room. I had stayed several times in the past at De Palma Hotel in Ampang Point. The management of the hotel knew me well and usually gave me a discount on a hotel room. But hotel rates had increased by 300% since my last visit.

I accepted Kamran's offer to share his apartment with him while we looked for a furnished apartment to rent. Kamran had discovered me from my

website and was instantly attracted to my writing and my lectures. He was in correspondence with me by email for some time prior to my arrival in KL. He was Pakistani and his wife, Mariam, was Chinese. And it was she who, with typical Chinese efficiency, located a lovely furnished apartment for me close to Ampang Point. The rent was more than I had planned to pay (US\$400 per month), but the Malay owner kindly consented to a lease of only 8 months. No one else would agree to such a short-term lease. He did subject me to quite some questioning to establish my *bona fides* before he agreed to rent to me. By the end of the year he would become a dear friend. The apartment-building was located on a height and had an absolutely stunning view of KL's night-time skyline dominated by the beautiful Petronas Twin Towers. And so on April 10th, within less than 3 weeks of my arrival in KL, I moved into my own apartment.

In addition, a dear friend who lived in a suburb of KL came forward to lend me an almost brand new car. Muhammad Chisty was the grandson of Dr Munshi of Singapore who, in turn, was a close and dear friend of *Maulānā* Abdul Aleem Siddiqui. When *Maulānā* Ansari lived in Singapore in 1935 for a period of one year, it was at Dr Munshi's residence that he stayed. Muhammad's mother, who is still alive and resident in Singapore, was Dr Munshi's eldest daughter.

My only problem about driving in KL was that I kept on getting lost. Kuala Lumpur's road network resembled the inside of a pomegranate. Road maps were of little help, and one had to memorize roads. When you get lost at 10 in the night and with rain falling, it can be so vexing that tears can fall from your eyes – as they once did from mine. But I soon solved that problem. I would drive my car only on such roads with which I was familiar, and for other journeys I would park my car in the basement of the Ampang Shopping Mall and then take a taxi. KL's taxi drivers are friendly, courteous and

talkative. Most of them spoke English and one could learn a lot from chatting with them. The secret tool I used for good conversion was to enquire where the driver was born. He would usually name a part of Malaysia other than KL. You could then gently coax him into singing the praise of his native town or village and how different life was in his village when compared to KL.

It was not just KL's taxi drivers who usually came from villages located in the countryside, rather a large proportion of the city's Malay population seemed to have the same rustic origins. They all traveled back to their native towns and villages to spend the *Eīd al-Fitr* and *Eīd al-Adhā* holidays and as consequence KL at the time of the two *Eīds* was like Paris in August.

My wife, Aisha, arrived in KL from New York on April 15th, days after I had moved into the apartment. She had left Trinidad for NY one week prior to my departure for Caracas. And so we were reunited after a break of two months. At the age of 65 it was not easy for me to engage in prolonged travel without my wife at my side to provide support and companionship, and in Aisha Allah Most Kind had sent to me a perfect wife.

A dear Egyptian friend of mine, married to a Malay girl, was self-taught in the use of computers and in software production and had established a business in producing and marketing Islamic software. The name of the business was *Al-Tasneem*. Mamdouh offered his business office to me so that I could use it as my office. He also introduced me to his assistant, an Egyptian named Tariq, who was very helpful to me all through my stay in KL. I now settled down to the back-breaking work of editing all three manuscripts of my new books before printing them out as hardcopy. It was easier for those who had to do the work of proof-reading the manuscripts if they could have both soft and hard copies.

I had published several books in the past and I knew how tedious a job it was to edit a manuscript. In the process of re-reading the manuscript in preparation for publication, an author usually gets a few new ideas that he would want to incorporate in the manuscript. He may also want to edit and rewrite certain sentences or passages of his book. When an author has to edit three books at the same time the job becomes truly back-breaking.

I used *Al-Tasneem* during the day and my laptop at night to work on the manuscripts, and I kept Aisha entertained by taking her out to different restaurants at night for dinner. I asked her to take a break from cooking since there were so many restaurants all close by and the price of food was very reasonable. Food was cheap since this was an indispensable prerequisite for a feminist revolution to succeed in Malaysia's Muslim society. We would sometimes have a Chinese dinner and at other times an Indonesian or Thai dinner. There were also restaurants offering *Halāl* food from Iran, Lebanon, Morocco, Taiwan, etc. There were lots of Indian and Malay restaurants but neither of us had Indian or Malay stomachs. Aisha's favorite meal was a spicy Thai '*Tom Yam*' soup that was served with rice.

We would sometimes make our own breakfast and sometimes we would drive over to a nearby restaurant owned by a dear Malay friend and would have popular Malaysian breakfast of *Roti Canai* or *Thosay*. I also located a kiosk in a Carrefour Supermarket selling Arabian coffee. We got them to grind the coffee beans for us according to our liking and to then package the coffee in small plastic bags which were then air-sealed. We would sip truly delicious coffee several times a day.

Shirazdeen Adam Shah was a young Malaysian of South Indian origin who had become attached to me during my previous visits to Malaysia. He had great love for *Islām* and grieved over the fact that, according to him, "*Islām was the most oppressed religion in Malaysia*". He and Nik Mahani Mohamad,

a former banker, had embraced my mission against fraudulent paper currency and my promotion of the gold *Dinār* and silver *Dirham* and had struggled against the odds to persuade others to this way of thinking.

Shirazdeen had written to me before I left home, to offer to coordinate and manage my program of speaking engagements in Kuala Lumpur. I accepted his kind offer and he became my assistant for the entire duration of my stay in KL. He did an excellent job under difficult circumstances. I remember the effort he made to arrange a lecture on '*Islām and Crime*' with the Malaysian Police Service. He had several meetings with them, including an interview with the Police Commissioner himself, but did not succeed in arranging the lecture. May Allah bless Shirazdeen for the great effort he made to assist me. *Āmīn*. Public Lectures and speaking engagements were also arranged by another dear friend who was a management consultant with important connections with the elite of KL society.

I had brought with me from Trinidad the DVDs of about 18 of my lectures on several important topics such as *Dajjāl* the false Messiah, Gog and Magog, an Islamic view of the return of Jesus, etc. *Al-Tasneem* designed beautiful stick-on labels for each DVD and began production of the DVDs in bulk. I received several speaking invitation during April and May and my books and DVDs were put on sale at these events. In particular I was very pleased with the invitation from the national electricity company of Malaysia, 'Tenaga', to address them on the occasion of the *Maulid al-Nabi* (also known as *Mīlād al-Nabi*). Tenaga's CEO himself attended the event and personally introduced me to the audience. The sales from such events were enough to give me the means to meet my immediate expenses.

I also lectured on '*Signs of the Last Day in the Modern Age*' before a very select audience at the Subang Golf Course auditorium in the Subang Jaya district of Kuala Lumpur. In that lecture I sought to develop the subject of the

Gog and Magog world-order. Among those present were people connected to several business and professional institutions. I had grown accustomed, over the years, to the skepticism with which classically-educated ‘*Ulamā* as well as those who were secularly-educated responded to my explanation and analysis of the subject of ‘*Signs of the Last Day in Islām*’. This was particularly so in all that pertained to *Dajjāl* as well as to Gog and Magog. It was therefore quite refreshing when an American PhD student at Malaysia’s prestigious International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC), who also attended the lecture, was so impressed that he wrote to me as follows: “*I was most impressed, refreshed and inspired by your recent talk on Gog and Magog. My conclusion is that you are on the frontier of research into this matter. My concern is that your basic insights are further developed and that they are spread rapidly to Muslim intellectuals and leaders*”.

UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY MARA

J was invited to address the subject “*Would Israel attack Iran?*” in a lecture to be delivered at the Mara University of Technology in KL. The topic was quite provocative and provoked a stimulating discussion. The Dean of one of the faculties of the university was a longtime acquaintance and she was delighted when I accepted her invitation to speak at the university on that subject. The lecture, which was delivered before a packed auditorium, was well received. But I had made mention in my closing remarks about certain *Signs of the Last Day* as prophesied by our beloved Prophet (*sallallahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*), and in that connection I had quoted the prophecy that “*women would be dressed and yet be naked*”.

A Christian woman who was a Professor at the university took umbrage at that remark and waded into me with blatantly hostile and sarcastic remarks. She wondered aloud whether her trousers which covered her legs and her

long-sleeved shirt which covered her arms had saved her from being so castigated and publicly humiliated. The blessed Prophet had accurately prophesied the modern feminist revolution and had exposed it as dangerous and misguided. I was quite surprised and angered by her hostile and sarcastic remarks and I responded to her attack on the blessed Prophet with such firmness that her own fire quickly cooled down. The Dean would later confide in me that she and her staff were apprehensive about how that Professor would respond to a lecture by an Islamic scholar at a modern secular university which offered an Islamic viewpoint on such a contemporary issue.

I expected that an attack on Iran would take place. I further expected that Israel would initiate such an attack, and that USA and UK would then join in the war while playing a secondary supporting role. I also expected Israel to use nuclear weapons, or even new weapons of mass destruction never before used in warfare. If Israel were to launch such an attack on Iran, my view was that the implications would be truly momentous for the whole world. It would result in Israel formally replacing USA as the third and last ruling State to emerge from modern western civilization. That, in turn, would make it possible for a truly evil genius to eventually emerge as Israel's leader. He would declare himself to be the divinely-promised Messiah when, in fact, he would be *Dajjāl* the false Messiah.

But there was another dimension to the subject that I was slowly beginning to understand, i.e., that the Judeo-Christian alliance was playing a delaying game while constantly keeping the fires burning with warnings of an attack on Iran. It was beginning to become clear that this was a diversionary tactic that was being used to divert attention from Israel's enslavement and possible genocide of those Muslims in Gazzah in particular who supported the Palestinian Islamic resistance and who opposed the secular PLO's capitulation to Israel.

We sat down for a meal after the lecture and I was happy to meet again with Ambassador Salahuddin who used to be attached to the Malaysian Institute of Diplomacy and was now a Professor at the University. I met him for the first time when I lectured at the Institute a few years ago. We explored the subject on which I had just spoken and he expressed his appreciation for the effort I was making to inject a religious dimension into the analysis of vitally important political and economic issues affecting the world of *Islām*. ‘*Would Israel attack Iran?*’ was, perhaps, at the top of the list of such subjects.

PENANG ISLAND - MALAYSIA

In late April Aisha and I traveled for the first time for the year to the Malaysian island of Penang. The Islamic Propagation Society International of Penang (IPSI), headed by my dear student Kamarudin Abdullah, had made it clear that they wanted to host me for several lectures in Penang, and these would be dispersed throughout the year.

My lecture in Penang on the same subject, *Would Israel attack Iran?*, was far more comprehensive than that previously delivered at the university and I lamented that no arrangements had been made to video-record the lecture.

We had driven to Penang from KL with old friends who had roots in both Penang and KL, and Aisha and I enjoyed the drive as well as the stops on the way where we could enjoy delicious Malaysian fruits.

THE INTERNATIONAL BOOK FAIR – KUALA LUMPUR

In late April I also had my first ever experience of participating in a Book Fair. Malaysia’s International Book Fair was held at PWTC (the *Putra* World Trade Center), and sure enough, I got lost while driving to the PWTC

building. When I did eventually find the building and found parking in the basement, I was astounded at the very large number of people who visited the Fair. I was later informed that attendance had exceeded one million. *Al-Tasneem* had taken two stalls in which my books and DVDs of lectures were prominently displayed. I was also invited by the organizers to deliver a public lecture during the Fair.

TROUBLE! TROUBLE! TROUBLE!

Aisha and I went with a Bengali family to a KL shopping mall we had never visited before. It was close to sunset and we enquired about the location of the *Surau* in the shopping mall where we could perform our *Salāt al-Maghrib*. As I was approaching the place where I could perform my ablutions (*Wudu*) for prayer, a young Arab approached me “*Ya Shaikh! Kaifa Haluk?*” (How are you?) *Min aina anta?* (From where have you come?). I should have realized the artificiality of his approach and taken steps to guard myself from harm. I performed my *Wudu* and then entered the *Surau* where I found that the *Jama’ah* was waiting on me to lead them in prayer. As I left the *Surau* after the prayer was over, I suddenly missed both my wallet and Passport which were in the pocket of my *Jubba* (gown). This was every traveler’s worst nightmare – to be the victim of a pick-pocket. Fortunately there was no money in my wallet. Aisha had money in her purse. My real loss was my passport and driver’s licence.

I immediately turned to Allah Most High in prayer and beseeched Him to assist me in this moment of great distress. I kept on reciting the first ten verses of *Sūrah al-Kahf*.

We reported the loss to the Customer Service desk at the shopping mall and then went to the Ampang Police Station to make a report. I then found to

my great surprise that the feminist revolution was alive, strong, and making significant progress in a Malaysia that was ruled by those who could not ‘see’. The entire staff of the police station was comprised of Malaysian women police officers. After making the report we returned to the apartment to spend a most miserable night. I began making plans to call the Trinidad and Tobago High Commission in New Delhi next day to get a new passport. I would also have to visit Motor Vehicles Department to get some kind of written permission to drive a car. I also called my friends in Singapore to inform them that we would have to postpone our visit to Singapore which was due to take place within a week.

At about ten that night we got a call from the shopping mall informing us cleaners who were cleaning the *Surau* had found both the passport and wallet. We rushed to the shopping mall and found to our relief that nothing was missing. The pick-pockets were after only money, and since there was none in the wallet they very kindly disposed of both items by placing them in a corner of the *Surau* where they were certain to be recovered. Allah was Kind. He had answered my prayer. Praise and thanks be to Him Most High.

SINGAPORE

One week later, in mid-May, Aisha and I went on our first trip out of Malaysia, to nearby Singapore. Whenever we entered Malaysia with our Trinidad and Tobago passports we were always given permission (it is called a visit pass) to stay in the country for a period not exceeding one month. We could apply for one extension of a month – but would have to leave the country after that additional month since no further extensions were allowed. It was time to leave Malaysia before our visit passes expired so we flew from KL to Johor Bahru and two dear friends drove from Singapore to pick us up at

the JB airport and drive us into Singapore. Although I was apprehensive about it, we had no problems with Immigration while entering Singapore.

I had been visiting Singapore regularly ever since my first visit in 1988, and by Allah's Grace and Kindness, had become one of the most popular speakers on *Islām* in the English language in that country. After 9/11 however, the very large numbers of people who flocked to my lectures usually could not be accommodated even in the very large lecture-halls. The Singaporean authorities, who were close allies of the State of Israel, caught cold-feet and decided in 2002 to deny me a permit that would allow me to deliver public lectures in that country. This was the dictatorship that was falsely presented to the world as Singaporean democracy.

I used my one week in Singapore to deliver some private lectures in small residential apartments. I also tried to make arrangements during my visit for my new books to be launched in Singapore at the end of July. I visited the offices of the Muslim Converts' Association of Singapore which was the venue over the years of many of my well-attended public lectures. The whole building would be packed with people and screens would have to be placed on different floors of the building to relay the lecture to those who could not see me. I made a formal request to the Muslim Converts' Association for permission to launch my three new books on the ground floor of the building. In addition to the normal autographing of copies of the new books by the author, the launch would consist of nothing more than a *Duah*. A former President of the Association as well as former members of the board of directors came forward to offer a guarantee to the current President that the program of the launch would be restricted to a *Duah* and to the autographing of books by the author. They reminded him that two of the books were based on the *Qur'ān*.

To their eternal shame the leadership of the Muslim Converts' Association rejected my request. After all, two of my three books were on *Sūrah al-Kahf* of the *Qur'ān*, and I had already delivered lectures on this subject in Singapore and, indeed, at the Muslim Converts' Association's office building itself on several occasions over the years.

My Singaporean and Trinidadian readers in particular, would be saddened to learn the news concerning the conduct of the leadership of the Muslim Converts' Association. The lesson for them, if they want to preserve their faith in *Islām*, is to take heed and refuse to associate with those so-called Muslim leaders and so-called Islamic associations which bow to, and serve the interests of enemies of *Islām*.

KOTA BAHRU - MALAYSIA

In early June Aisha and I traveled with Nik Mahani and her husband to the Northern Malaysian city of Kota Bahru. It was located in the State of Kelantan which bordered Thailand. The opposition *Parti Islām SeMalaysia* (PAS) ruled over the State. The Chief Minister, *Ustāz* Nik Abdul Aziz, was an Islamic scholar who had studied at the Deoband *Dār al-'Ulūm* in India, then studied at another *Dār al-'Ulūm* in Lahore in Pakistan, and had finally graduated from Al-Azhar University in Egypt. He was fluent in Urdu.

The Kelantan State Government had invited me to speak before a select gathering of government officials and bankers on the subject: "*The Gold Dinar and Silver Dirham – Islām and the Future of Money*". Husam Musa was the heir-apparent to the Chief Minister, and he introduced me to the gathering. I had met Husam, and had spent a whole week with him twenty years earlier when I visited Malaysia for the very first time. PAS had joined with the Muslim Institute for Research and Planning in London to organize, in

July 1988, a seminar on the *Hajj*, and I had been invited to travel from Karachi to address the seminar.

I got into trouble with PAS over my remark that the modern secular state was *Dajjāl's* creation and had been cleverly established on the foundations of *Shirk* (blasphemy). I argued that participation in electoral politics on the basis of allegiance to the constitution of the secular state took one into *Shirk*. PAS was quite upset over those remarks, but it did not prevent them from taking two of us (a Jordanian scholar was the second) on a tour of all the major cities of Malaysia. Husam Musa, then a very serious young man who never smiled, was chosen to accompany us on the tour. And now in Kota Bahru I was seeing Husam again for the first time in twenty years. He had put on weight and over the years had learnt to smile. He recalled our time spent together twenty years ago, and confided that he had been keeping himself informed of my activities.

At the end of the lecture I found the bankers furious with me. I had knocked the wind out of their sails for they had been convinced of the validity of Islamic banking and, in particular, about so-called *Murābaha* transactions of Islamic banks. They were also busy putting into place an Islamic system of credit cards. They seemed less than concerned about my prediction that the US dollar would soon collapse and meltdown and that the electronic money that would then totally replace paper currencies would function as the equivalent of a financial *Guantanamo*.

The next day, Friday, I experienced the magic of *Ustāz* Nik Aziz as he addressed his usual Friday morning open air rally in Kota Bahru's main shopping area. It was directly in front of our hotel. From early morning people kept streaming into the area from villages outside of the city. By the time he began his address there was a veritable sea of Muslims all seated very peacefully in perfect silence beneath tents on mats spread out on the road itself. After his address was over he came to the hotel and I met with him to

discuss the subject of the lecture I had delivered the previous afternoon. His government had organized a conference on the *Gold Dinār Economy* scheduled to take place in KL in July, and I was one of the speakers invited to address the conference. He appeared uncomfortable with my use of the term ‘*Sunnah*’ money and suggested, instead, ‘*Mazhabi*’ money.

I was expecting the imminent collapse of the US dollar and I considered it to be a matter of tremendous importance for those who were attempting to direct attention to the subject of money in *Islām*. In fact the US dollar began to meltdown just a few months later, and at the time of writing of this travelogue nine months later here in Trinidad it had already reached US\$1000 for one ounce of gold. The absolutely amazing thing was that the scholars of *Islām* either had no knowledge of the subject, or were unconcerned about it. Here was startling evidence suggesting fulfillment of the Prophet’s prophecy that the scholars of *Islām* would one day be the worst people beneath the sky (*Sunan of Tirmidhi*).

Later that day, after the *Salāt al-Jumu’ah*, we went to the Kota Bahru market and Aisha and I enjoyed some delicious durians before flying back to KL.

KARACHI – PAKISTAN

Our one month in Malaysia since our arrival from Singapore was about to expire when we left for Pakistan. Only one of my new books (i.e., ‘*Sūrah al-Kahf: Text Translation and Modern Commentary*’) was printed in time for me to take a few copies with me to Pakistan. Aisha and I flew via Bangkok to Karachi in mid-June in the middle of the summer, and thus into searing heat. But that was the best time of the year to enjoy Pakistani mangoes.

Pakistan, under General Parvez Musharraf, had been kidnapped at gun-point and bulldozed into becoming a client-State of the Jewish-Christian alliance. The leadership of the Pakistan armed forces had become willing accomplices in the war on *Islām* that was being waged on behalf of Israel. A futile attempt was being made to transform the *dream* of an ‘Islamic Republic of Pakistan’ into the *reality* of an ‘American Republic of Pakistan’.

Even though we had no difficulty in obtaining Pakistani visas, I was quite apprehensive about the kind of welcome I would receive from Pakistani Immigration. But Allah Most High answered our *Duahs* and we passed through Immigration without difficulty. Indeed the Immigration officers and security police showed deference to a Muslim scholar and extended significant courtesy to me and my wife. We took an airport taxi and arrived at our three-star hotel in the old city-center area of Karachi close to midnight. Hotel rates had increased by 300 to 400% since last we visited, even though the hotel looked and felt just as plain and jaded as ever before.

A few days after our arrival in Karachi the rains came down in thunder-showers and the downtown area of the city was transformed into a huge sewer. This was because that old part of the city did not have a proper drainage and sewage system. During our stay of two weeks we also experienced the scare of a typhoon from which Karachi barely escaped. All of these took their toll on Aisha who was so upset that she could hardly eat anything. She remained in her hotel room for most of our two weeks stay.

I was happy to meet my daughter, Hira, in Karachi for the first time in four years. She adored her father and delighted in my company. I also met her mother who was my former wife and Dr Ansari’s daughter. I had parted from her in the kindness way possible and, as a consequence, we were able to maintain friendly ties with each other. Both Hira and her mother busied themselves in helping Aisha with her shopping in Karachi.

My dear friend, Abdur Rahman Hingora, was the CEO of the major Pakistani Islamic cable television channel, QTV, and he invited me to record a series of my lectures for broadcast on QTV. My own preference would have been to avoid all Islamic Cable TV so that I could preserve my freedom to preach *Islām* without fear or favor. And I made it clear to Hingora that the only reason I was prepared to appear on QTV was my friendship for him. I proceeded to select a list of some two dozen lecture-topics and sure enough the list was purged of such topics that directly targeted the Judeo-Christian bandits who were waging war on *Islām*. Topics of great contemporary relevance such as: “*Will Israel attack Iran?*” were struck off the list on the absurd plea that they were too political. In fact such topics were struck off since they would have offended Musharraf and his Judeo-Christian masters.

My suspicions concerning the proliferation of Islamic cable television around the world were further confirmed when Hingora presented me with an agreement which I was invited to sign as a condition for my lectures to be broadcast on QTV. Among other things the agreement prohibited me from criticizing the Pakistan armed forces in any way. I refused to sign such an agreement and, in the process, sign away my intellectual integrity as a scholar of *Islām*. He expressed surprise at my response since every other scholar of *Islām* who had appeared on QTV had signed the agreement.

Six months later when I was touring South Africa, QTV began to broadcast the seven lectures I had recorded (rains, thunder-showers, typhoons, traffic-jams and electrical outages in Karachi combined to restrict our recording to only seven lectures) and I began receiving information from people who knew me that they had viewed my lectures on QTV in places as far away as Europe and Southern Africa. The master-plan was now as plain as daylight to me – that Islamic cable television, under the watchful eyes of enemies of *Islām*, would now teach *Islām* to Muslims. In the process,

however, they would eventually and incrementally be so brainwashed that they would submit to the Jewish-Christian alliance and hence, to Israel.

A retired Pakistani accountant, Javed Iqbal Khan, had translated '*Jerusalem in the Qur'ān*' to Urdu, and we now launched the Urdu book at a program organized at the Karachi Press Club. Javed not only translated the book but also himself paid the cost of printing 1000 copies. He then put the book on sale in Pakistan for the princely sum of 125 rupees per copy (about US\$2), and even at that price he still experienced difficulties in getting it sold. But the launch did attract a number of Pakistani journalists and we got excellent coverage in at least one of the next day's newspapers.

I did get a chance during my brief stay in Karachi to visit my *alma mater* – the Aleemiyah Institute of Islamic Studies, but it was a tremendously depressing experience. Even the very name of the institution had been changed. I keep on returning to that compound, however, to pay my respects and to offer a prayer at the grave of my beloved teacher.

It was also a very painful experience for me to visit the ailing Wakeelur Rahman Ansari, who was Dr Ansari's last surviving brother. He would die a few months later.

I was invited to a dinner/discussion by the owner of a Pakistani publishing firm. He was a part of the Muslim intelligentsia of South Asia who had been influenced by Iqbal and, as a consequence, had rejected belief in the return of Jesus and in the advent of *Imām al-Mahdi*. The dinner was very delicious but the discussion was a disappointment since I failed to convince him on both subjects.

Wherever I went in Karachi, and regardless of whoever I contacted in the rest of Pakistan, I found universal hatred for the Pakistani military dictator, General Parvez Musharraf. He had betrayed *Islām* to the extent of even

attempting to convince the people that Pakistan should extend diplomatic recognition to the State of Israel. It did not surprise me therefore, when I subsequently read news reports that Pakistani people were taunting and ridiculing him with words such as: “*Dog, Musharraf, Dog*”! His alliance with George Bush’s war on *Islām* and his support for the State of Israel resulted in that universal contempt and hatred. The Muslims of Pakistan were neither blind, nor deaf, nor dumb!

JULY IN MALAYSIA

We returned to Kuala Lumpur on July 1st and the month of July turned out to be by far the most enjoyable, and yet ended as the most painful of my entire one year of travel. Firstly, my daughter Hira traveled from Karachi to KL to spend the entire month with me and Aisha. Then the second and third of my new books were printed and I had three new books to launch. The first launch took place in Penang in early July. I had lectured in Penang on numerous occasions over the last 20 years and was quite familiar with the island. Hira drove our car all the way from KL to Penang. We stopped at Tapah on the way and took a diversion that allowed us to view the beautiful Tapah waterfall. We also decided to take the ferry across the water to Penang rather than to drive over the bridge. The advantage of the ferry was that it took you straight to downtown Georgetown.

When we got to Penang we found that Kamarudin had responded to our request for a downtown hotel. On the last occasion Aisha and I had stayed in a hotel that was removed from the downtown area and there was hardly anything interesting to see while walking around the hotel.

I had to deliver three lectures in Penang on three consecutive nights of the weekend. The topics selected were as follows:

1. *An Islamic Response to the Modern Feminist Revolution;*
2. *Marriage in Islām;* and
3. *Islām and the End of History.*

I made sure this time around that the lectures were professionally recorded. I also used the occasion of the three public lectures to launch the three new books for the first time. The sales of the new books were also encouraging.

While I remained confined to our hotel room preparing the lectures Ruhaidah and Hafsa took Aisha and Hira around Penang island as well as to the bazaars. They enjoyed their visit. The only thing they missed was a ride on Penang's colorful bicycle rickshaws. The rider of a bicycle rickshaw normally pedals from the front with the passengers sitting behind him. In Penang however, the passengers sit at the front with the rider pedaling behind them.

A GUEST FROM TRINIDAD

Soon after our return from Penang to KL we had to drive to the airport to receive Marie Farida, who was one of Aisha's friends from Trinidad, and whose husband Haseeb, was also my dear friend. She traveled from London to KL to visit with us for a period of two weeks. This time we drove at nighttime, and again my daughter drove the car. Naturally we got lost on our way driving to the airport, but prayers and some luck allowed us finally reach the airport and receive our guest on time.

Our apartment was now so full of life and activity with Aisha, Hira and Marie Farida that there was light all around and much for which to thank Allah Most High. We drove on several occasions to the KLCC (Kuala Lumpur City

Center) area to the shopping mall attached to the magnificent twin towers building. We also drove several times to the '*Masjid India*' shopping area that was dominated by Indian-owned businesses. The *Masjid* itself was an imposing structure that could accommodate a few thousand people. I was invited to give the *Jumu'ah* talk there on several occasions. The *Khutbah al-Jumu'ah* however, was delivered in the Tamil language.

We also bought lots of durian, a fruit of the South East Asian region which has a terrible smell but a heavenly taste, and Hira had the time of her life opening them. Aisha loved durians, and I also eventually developed a taste for them. Marie Farida did not seem enthusiastic about them however. Then there was another heavenly fruit called mangostein which was not related in any way to mangoes, and also rambutan, lychies, logans, etc.

INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC CONFERENCE ON THE GOLD DINĀR ECONOMY

*A*s the month of July drew to a close I had to participate in two international Islamic conferences. The first, on the *Gold Dinār Economy*, was actually organized by the government of the State of Kalantan in northern Malaysia. But for political reasons the government could not be directly identified as the organizer of the conference. And so the name of an NGO (non-governmental organization) was used. Two people closely connected to me, Shirazdeen Adam Shah and Nik Mahani Mohamad, the banker, had joined a team of like-minded scholars and academics and it was this team which did the actual work of organizing the conference.

They invited the former Malaysian Prime Minister, Tun Dr Mahathir, to deliver the opening address of the conference, and after Husam Musa had welcomed him he proceeded to deliver a very good feature address. He

covered the subject in a masterly way. After all, he had tremendous practical experience during his twenty years as Prime Minister of Malaysia, and he demonstrated his capacity to uncover the layers of deception that *Dajjāl* had used to conceal the exploitative nature of the international monetary system of non-redeemable paper currencies.

After Dr Mahathir had completed his address those of us who had also been invited to address the conference were introduced to him. I took the opportunity to present him with copies of my three new books which he gratefully accepted. I had met with his son a few years earlier and had sent a copy of '*Jerusalem in the Qur'an*' for him. We chatted for a brief moment recalling his visit to Trinidad a few years earlier.

I presented my paper on '*The Disappearance of Money with Intrinsic Value*' in the first session of the conference immediately following the feature address. I argued that gold and silver had disappeared as money in consequence of a master-plan devised by the mysterious Judeo-Christian alliance that now ruled the world on behalf of the Euro-Jewish State of Israel. They had skillfully replaced money in the form of gold and silver coins with an utterly bogus and fraudulent monetary system that they could use to impoverish mankind. That monetary system was *Harām*. Its ultimate function was to reduce mankind to such poverty and destitution that the Judeo-Christian alliance could impose a financial dictatorship upon all those who resisted their rule over the world. I lamented the fact that those who in the modern age were recognized as '*Ulamā* (i.e., scholars of *Islām*), were in fact a people without '*Ilm* (i.e., knowledge) of this crucially important subject.

The conference lasted two days, and on both days I was able to interact with distinguished delegates and speakers from various parts of the world. The organizers of the conference kindly provided a table for my books and DVDs

of lectures to be put on sale, and with help from *Tasneem*'s staff delegates were able to obtain copies of my books and DVDs of lectures.

Dr Omar Ibrahim Vadillo, the Spanish-born Islamic scholar who had pioneered the struggle for the return of the Gold *Dinār*, urged the conference to adopt a macro-strategy for recovering the use of the *Dinār* as money in the world of *Islām*. At the heart of his strategy was the electronic or *E-Dinār*. Central clearing houses or *Wakāla* would have to be established at various centers and people would then create individual accounts through storing their actual gold *Dinārs* in a *Wakāla*. They would then be able to make purchases and effect money transfers electronically simply through drawing on their account.

My view was that such a strategy was bound to end in painful failure when the bandits who now ruled the world, simply seized the gold while using one pretext or another. I urged, instead, that the gold *Dinār* and silver *Dirham* remain in the pockets of the people who would have a responsibility to protect their own wealth and property. I proposed instead, a micro-strategy of establishing micro-markets in the country-side with the *Dinār* and *Dirham* used as the medium of exchange in transactions in such markets. I also pointed out, in the event of a shortage of gold and silver coins, the *Sunnah* made provisions for commodities of food consumption such as dates, rice, sugar, wheat, barley, salt, etc., in adequate supply in the market to be used as money.

The Kalantan Chief Minister, *Ustāz* Nik 'Abdul 'Aziz, attended the banquet held at the end of the conference and I had a chance to meet him once again. The conference ended with a promise of follow-up action, but the Malaysian general elections which were due within the next few months, intervened, and I therefore went ahead and published an expanded version of my paper with a new title: '*The Gold Dinār and Silver Dirham – Islām and the Future of Money*'. By the time I left Malaysia at the end of December on my

way back home we had already printed and distributed 10,000 copies of that booklet, and the effort was underway to have it translated into the *Bahasa Malayu* language and published.

I believe that the International Gold *Dinār* Conference had a positive impact on Muslim Malaysia. Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi paid the price for his summary rejection of the efforts that Dr Mahathir had made concerning the Gold *Dinār*, and for his careless threat to oppose the introduction of the *Dinār* as money in Malaysia. His coalition government suffered badly in the elections.

KUALA LUMPUR AIRPORT MASJID AND THE INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC FAIR

On the day of *Jumu'ah* that came immediately after the conclusion of the *International Conference on the Gold Dinār Economy* I had to deliver the *Jumu'ah* talk at the KL Airport *Masjid*. The *Masjid* had been built with the design of a flying saucer and it was located in a security-protected area inside the compound of the Airport. The *Salāt al-Jumu'ah* usually attracted a few thousand employees of the airport and of Malaysian Airlines. I had given the *Jumu'ah* talk at this *Masjid* on several occasions over the years. The verse of *Sūrah al-Nūr* which described Allah Most High as “*the light of the Samawāt (i.e., different worlds of space and time) and the earth*” used to be inscribed on the wall inside the *Mimbar*. I noticed on this occasion that as a consequence of my several talks on *Sūrah al-Kahf* previously delivered at this *Masjid*, the management had replaced that verse with the first ten verses of *Sūrah al-Kahf*.

I must have picked up a virus while at that Airport *Masjid* since I was down with fever and flu before the day was done. The very next morning I

was scheduled to deliver a lecture in the very opening session of the International Islamic Fair at PWTC (the *Putra* World Trade Center). The fever subsided next morning just enough to permit me to go to PWTC in the car that was sent to fetch me, and to deliver my address and then promptly return to my bed. Sri Lanka's Justice Ghaffur was sitting in the audience at that conference and we had arranged that we would meet to discuss my proposed second lecture-tour of Sri Lanka, but I had to leave the hall without being able to even greet him.

But I did get a chance to chat briefly with other invited speakers who included a Sudanese government minister, a former employee of the British secret service, and a Latino fire officer named Rodriguez who was one of the last fire officers to leave Manhattan's World Trade Center Twin Towers before they collapsed. The 9/11 commission of enquiry ignored his evidence that he heard explosions in the building indicating that there was controlled demolition.

TROUBLE IN SINGAPORE

On our previous visit to Singapore, in the month of May, we had no difficulties with the Singaporean Immigration while entering the country. But an important reason for our ease of entry was our mode of transport. Aisha and I had traveled by air from KL to the Southern Malaysian city of Johor Bahru, which is very close to Singapore, and our Singaporean friends had driven over to Johor Bahru to receive us and to drive us over to Singapore. On this occasion, however, at the end of July, we did not have that facility of traveling through Johor Bahru, and rather than spend an enormous amount of money on three air tickets direct to Singapore we chose to travel instead by luxury coach. My daughter, Hira, insisted on returning home to Karachi, and so only Marie Farida accompanied us to Singapore. She planned to take her flight back to

London from Singapore. The journey from KL to Singapore took just three hours.

Only later would we realize that in trying to save on the expensive air tickets to Singapore and choosing, instead, to travel by luxury coach, we made a mistake. Our second mistake was to wait until we had only one day left in our one-month visit passes for Malaysia (we entered the country on July 1st) before commencing our travel to Singapore. The two international conferences had detained me in Malaysia, and what a price we paid for that delay in leaving the country.

On arrival in Singaporean territory we had to get off the bus and walk through a very large hall to Immigration and Customs. Dressed as I was, I stood in that large hall like a red flag before a very nervous Singaporean bull. Had I arrived by car I would not have had to even get out of the car.

Singapore Immigration detained us and proceeded to subject us to three hours of polite interrogation. I was escorted to a small room and an armed guard stood outside the room preventing me from leaving the room. When a Chinese officer later entered the room on some contrived errand, the armed guard entered with him. Perhaps he wanted to take a better look at me than was possible from behind the usual mirror or through the video camera.

Two non-Chinese Immigration Officers who introduced themselves to me as Muslims, were used to interrogate me. At first they simply wanted to satisfy their curiosity regarding the identity and profile of a visiting *Shaikh* who was dressed in a gown and had a *Shaikh's* hat on his head. When they learnt, however, that I had been denied permission after 9/11 to deliver public lectures in Singapore, it sent their antennas through the roof. They were not that dumb themselves to fail to realize that my preaching of *Islām* did not conform to the requirements of Singapore's non-Muslim government which

had transformed the State into little Israel, and that was the reason for the refusal to issue me a permit to speak in Singapore.

I kept on reciting the first ten verses of *Sūrah al-Kahf*, as well a verse of *Sūrah Yāsīn* with which most readers would be familiar, throughout three hours of interrogation. They proceeded on what can only be described as a shameful three-hour-long ‘fishing expedition’. My wife and I were kept in separate rooms. It left my wife so traumatized that she could no longer stay in that region of the world and immediately requested my permission to return to her children in USA. At the end of the fishing expedition the Singaporean Immigration announced that my wife and Marie Farida were free to enter Singapore but that I was denied permission to enter. They had perhaps learnt of my plan to launch my new books which had already been shipped to Singapore in advance of my arrival. They explained that permission to enter was denied “*because they did not want me to deliver even private lectures*”. And so, for the first time in my forty-six years of traveling around Allah’s earth I was denied permission to enter a country. It was most significant that they never questioned me on the potentially dangerous attack that had been launched against me in Trinidad despite the fact that would certainly have known about it. This was a demonstration of the power of *Sūrah al-Kahf* of the blessed *Qur’ān*.

Three weary travelers then made their way back to Malaysian Immigration where it took another few distressful hours for my matter to be sorted out. The problem for Malaysian Immigration was that I had just a few hours remaining in my Malaysian Visit Pass, and at the expiration of those few hours I would be illegally in the country. Aisha and Marie Farida did not have that problem since they had Singaporean Immigration stamps on their passport, and they were allowed back into Malaysia with one-month Visit Passes. I eventually got permission to re-enter Malaysia for a period of two

weeks. We then took the coach back to KL and arrived at our apartment long after midnight. The next few days were terrible. I struggled frantically to get a one-month Visit Pass in order to avoid having to leave the country and to return to Trinidad within two weeks.

Marie Farida left for London a few days later and Aisha returned to NY within two weeks time. Suddenly a lovely sun-lit July so filled with joy and happiness had disappeared, and I returned to a lonesome apartment with only the walls to keep me company. I even lost my taste for durians.

CAMERON HIGHLANDS - MALAYSIA

Before Aisha left, however, we went with friends from Bangladesh on a trip to the famed Malaysian hill resort called Cameron Highlands. It was located high up in the mountains and we had to leave the flat plain and climb for an hour by car before we finally arrived. We immediately felt the difference in temperature from the plains below. We were surrounded on all sides by lush green hills and valleys, and in some locations there were miles and miles of tea plantations. It was from the valley that stretched before us that the world got the famed Malaysian *Boh* Tea. We made a stop at a roadside café high up on the mountain where we drank delicious tea and ate hot scones as we admired the enchanting view below us.

We also paid a visit to a strawberry farm which doubled as a business selling flower plants. The rows and rows of strawberry plants laden with ripe strawberries which stretched before us was an unbelievable sight. There was a shop where we could buy strawberries and we joined the many customers who were buying strawberries to take back home to Kuala Lumpur, Penang and elsewhere in Malaysia.

LAUNCH OF NEW BOOKS IN KUALA LUMPUR

There are scholars of *Islām* who submit to government authority even within the Muslim world in respect of how to preach *Islām*. I am not one of them. I have always rejected requests that I seek a permit from Malaysian authorities in order to lecture in a *Masjid* in Malaysia. No government – not even that of the *Khalīfah* in *Dār al-Islām* – has the authority to issue or to deny permits for preaching and teaching *Islām*. The only thing that government (in *Islām*) can do is to seek a legal opinion from a *Mufti* with which to go a *Qadi* (judge) for a restraining order preventing someone from preaching or teaching Islam in a way that was false. Such an order would have to be based on the *Shari'ah*.

As a result of my refusal to submit to such unlawful authority I hardly ever get a chance of late to speak or teach at the large *Masājid* in which I lectured in the past. But there are a few noble exceptions such as *Masjid 'Umar ibn al-Khattab* in Damansara Heights, *Masjid Dār al-Ehsān Taman Tar* in Ampang, *Masjid al-Shāfe'i* in Taman Tun Dr Ismail, etc. The management at these *Masājid* had the courage to invite me to speak without seeking a permit from government. *Masjid Dār al-Ehsān Taman Tar* in particular has stood firmly beside me and supported me through thick and thin. They now agreed to host the launch in KL of my three new books.

We decided to launch the new books in mid-August on the day of *Jumu'ah* at the time of *Salāt al-Jumu'ah*. I gave a *Jumu'ah* talk introducing the new books, and at the end of the *Salāt* the *Imam* was supposed to make a special *Duah* thanking Allah that the books had been completed and published, and seeking blessings on them. The *Imam* forgot to make the *Duah*, but that did not dampen the enthusiasm of the gathering for obtaining autographed copies of the new books. As I autographed the new books I

noticed that there were two men sitting in a nearby car observing what was going on. They waited until I was driving out of the compound before getting out of their car to approach the stall with my books. I later learnt that they asked some questions and made some phone calls. That Special Branch plain-clothed police officers should have been monitoring the launch of books on the *Qur'ān* in a country which proclaimed *Islām* as its State religion was indicative of extreme state control and the authoritarian nature of the political system in a Malaysia that sought to portray itself as a model Islamic State.

A GUEST FROM OMAN

In view of the ferocity of the war on *Islām* in the Arab world in particular, it might be advisable not to mention in this travelogue the name of an ardent Arab Muslim who traveled all the way from Oman to meet with me in Kuala Lumpur. He arrived at my apartment dressed in his Omani gown and Omani cap. He made a striking picture.

He had come across my website and recordings of my lectures on subjects such as Gog and Magog as well as *Dajjāl*, and he was absolutely convinced that my interpretation and analysis of the verses of the *Qur'ān* as well as the *Ahadīth* on the subject were correct. He informed me that there was a growing community of Muslims in Oman who were similarly convinced about the validity of my views presented on my website. They shared a common concern about the growing westernization and consequent loss of faith of Arab society, and longed with a great longing for the realization of project of the Muslim Village that I had articulated.

I was tremendously moved by the experience of meeting someone whose sincere love for *Islām* was so visible in everything he said and every thing he did. He spent about one week in Malaysia and I assisted him to make

important contacts in the State of Kalantan to which he then traveled in search of land in which to settle with his family.

JAKARTA - INDONESIA

Ramadan was fast approaching, and since my lecture-tours of Sri Lanka and of Hong Kong had both been postponed until after Ramadan, I decided to make a quick trip to beautiful Indonesia before Ramadan. I also decided, as a consequence of what Singaporean Immigration had done to me, to cancel my proposed lecture-tours of Australia and New Zealand. I recalled that the blessed Prophet (*sallallahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*) had warned that “*a Muslim does not put his foot in the same hole twice*”. Cancellation of Australia and New Zealand was not only a great disappointment for the large numbers of Muslims who were awaiting my arrival there, but it also meant loss of a significant market for my new books. I had learnt from experience over the years that my books sold very well whenever I was physically present and lecturing in a place.

I had visited Indonesia only once before, in 2001, on a lecture-tour that lasted for two unforgettable weeks. On that occasion Aisha was with me and we had toured the island of Java both East and West of Jakarta, and we had even flown to Jogjakarta. On this occasion I was able to stay for only one week with visits out of Jakarta to Banten in East Java and the famous mountain resort town of Bandung.

A group of ardent young Indonesian Muslim men who had one elder Muslim sister with them had broken away from the Islamic organization which had hosted me on my previous visit. And it was this young and enterprising group which hosted me on this visit. But they worked me to the bone. I had very little rest in-between a packed program of lectures and very

long hours of driving in endless traffic jams. *Mashrakat Muslim Antarabangsa* (International Muslim Association) had teamed up with *Dompét Dua'afah* (an organization that specialized in taking care of orphans) to organize my lecture-tour of Indonesia. *Basnas*, the *Zakāt* body established by the Indonesian government, provided funding.

On my first night in Jakarta I had to put up with hosts of mosquitoes as I tried to sleep in a students' hostel at a school for orphan boys. But the joy of meeting with them in the *Masjid* the next morning for *Salāt al-Fajr*, and then addressing them with stories from the *Hadīth*, more than made up for the discomfort of the night.

The next day I was taken to a hotel run by the Islamic University and that was where I stayed for the rest of my lecture-tour. But I did have to visit the boy's school one more time in order to address the staff members. The Indonesian Principal was educated in USA and spoke English with an American accent. He seemed less than comfortable with me when I devoted much of the little time allotted to me to warn the staff about the grave dangers of a secular western education. Instead, I argued the case for the *Qur'ān* to be recognized as the foundation of all education in *Islām*.

When I was taken on an official visit to Basnas I found to my surprise that the Director was a young Indonesian woman, and that many of the staff were women. The Director took me through a video which displayed the activities of the organization. I was more than happy to accept the cup of *Tè* (Indonesian for tea) that was later served.

I was later taken to a secondary school for girls located in the city of Bogor, outside of Jakarta. The elderly Indonesian female Principal assembled all the staff and all the students in the school hall for my address, and I naturally chose to tell a story. It was truly wonderful to see hundreds of

teenaged Muslim girls all in *Hijāb*. In my own Trinidad even in Muslim-run secondary schools for girls most Muslim girls are without *Hijāb* and the so-called Islamic organization which runs the schools seems quite unconcerned about it.

My story made a tremendous impact on the girls and when we went outdoors for a tour of the compound they crowded around me and insisted on taking endless photographs. The Principal finally extricated me and took me through a winding path of vegetable gardens in reddish colored earth to her home. We enjoyed a delicious Indonesian lunch and then settled down for a serious exchange of views on the challenges of modern western education in a Muslim society. Time and again I would find Indonesians to be far advanced in their thought and more conscious than others of the dangers of the modern world.

But there were moments that were truly unforgettable, like the occasion when I was invited to attend a *Hijāb Day* program organized by an Indonesian women's group and held in a university hall. The hall was packed with Indonesian women and the very few men who were present sat in a corner at the back of the hall. When I was taken to sit at the very front of the gathering I found to my astonishment that there were about six young very beautiful women sitting on the stage and that they were all dressed in bridal white with big red flowers attached to their clothes and *Hijābs*. They looked to be either brides or actresses. In fact they were all Indonesian film actresses who were formerly bare-headed but had decided to enter into *Hijāb*, and they all told the story of their journey to *Hijāb* one by one while I sat there in utter astonishment.

The young woman who conducted the program responded to my arrival by making explanatory comments for my benefit in perfect English. To make matters ever more inexplicable a woman came to me during an interval in the

program and introduced herself as the editor of *Al-Nūr*, an Islamic magazine for women. She presented me with a copy of the magazine and requested permission to interview me. As I glanced through the glossy magazine I found to my utter amazement that I could not find a single error of language or even punctuation in it. It had been perfectly edited. The MC responded to my bewilderment with the sweetest of smiles and with the news that she had lived and studied in Britain for many years, hence her command of the English language, and that the magazine had a very competent British woman who edited it for language, punctuation, etc.

I had to deliver a *Jumu'ah* talk at Jakarta's *Masjid al-Azhar* and while my talk was being beamed to the entire surrounding area via the *Masjid's* many microphones, a woman passed by and was astonished to hear English being spoken in the *Masjid*. She made her way to the office of the *Masjid* and enquired about me. She obtained a contact number and called to invite me to her home for a meal. My hosts made the necessary arrangements and the lunch was scheduled for the next day. In the meantime we had to leave the *Masjid* immediately after the *Salāt al-Jumu'ah* and drive for endless hours to the East Javan town of Serang in the province of Banten.

SERANG IN BANTEN - INDONESIA

A press conference had been arranged for that evening in the town of Serang, and when we got to the building there was no electricity. And so the press conference took place in candle-light. My photograph appeared in the next day's local newspaper. If you want to see what a ghost looks like, you must have your photograph taken by candlelight. I used the press conference to argue the case for such a restructuring of institutions of higher Islamic learning as would equip graduates with the capacity to grapple with the unprecedented challenges posed by the strange and mysterious modern age.

The next day I was invited to attend a training session for some 400 Indonesian village teachers. My talk was scheduled for 2 in the afternoon, so I was spared attending the long morning session. Instead I was accommodated in a village home until it was time for me to be taken to the training session. I noticed a big pond built within the courtyard (of the village home) in which they reared fish. Water was cleverly diverted to the pond from a nearby river. I sat by the pond and watched the fish swimming merrily and to the hearts' content. The women of the home prepared an Indonesian village lunch which they served to me after I had performed my *Salāt al-Zuhr*.

BANDUNG - INDONESIA

After I had addressed the teachers, with a young man making a brave effort to translate my talk to Bahasa Indonesia, we left at 4 in the afternoon on an impossibly long and tiring journey to Bandung. We never reached Bandung until 10 in the night. That night I realized the benefit of a blanket since Bandung was located high up in the mountains and the night-time temperature was quite cold. Next morning I had to deliver a talk at a big *Masjid* immediately after the *Salāt al-Fajr*. Students from all over Indonesia had assembled at that *Masjid* for religious training. I took up the subject of *Ribā* and conducted an interesting hour-long session. At the end of it, as the students came forward to greet me, one of them admired my ring. “*It is an Indonesian stone*” I said. “*Can I have it?*” he asked. Islamic etiquette required that I take the ring that I had worn for the last 16 years from off my finger and give it to him as a gift. I then gave my hosts in Indonesia some money with which to buy a replacement ring with a similar sky-blue stone.

I was then taken for a walk through the bazaars of Bandung until we arrived at a restaurant where a very large number of those who were with me in the *Masjid* all lined up for an Indonesian breakfast. We joined the line of

men, women and children and one could immediately sense the fraternal ties which bonded the Indonesian people. *Islām* unites people in a wonderful fraternity. I enjoyed my Indonesian breakfast of noodles all the more because I was terribly hungry.

Later that Sunday morning we traveled back to Jakarta to accept the invitation for lunch that had been extended two days earlier. We were greeted by the Indonesian woman, her British husband and their two handsome young sons. When we got to the home I then realized why they were so keen to have me in their home. They had lived in England for 16 years. Two years ago however, she had experienced a spiritual awakening and had come back to the life of a practicing Muslim. The first thing that she did was to start wearing the *Hijāb*. She was delighted to have me in her home and she bombarded me with a thousand questions concerning living the Muslim way of life in the modern age. Her British husband was very shy and quiet and hardly ever asked a question. But they both insisted when next I visited Indonesia I accept their invitation to stay in their home as a guest. Since I had to deliver a lecture in a *Masjid* that very night they invited me to take some rest after lunch, and I slept for an hour.

The lecture that night in the *Masjid* was on the *Gold Dinār and Silver Dirham*. The young man who translated my talk to Bahasa Indonesia was corrected on several occasions by English-speaking members of the audience. My Indonesian audience was so passionately interested in the subject of the lecture that they just could not get enough of it to satisfy their thirst for understanding. One of the reasons why Indonesians had such interest in the subject of *Islām and Money* was because their own money had been attacked and had melted down to such an extent that one US dollar was worth more than 10,000 Indonesian Rupiahs.

RAMADAN IN KUALA LUMPUR

I had my first taste of the fast of *Ramadān* in Kuala Lumpur a few years earlier and I loved it. The Malay people in Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei have a sense of melody and a love for harmony that combine to make their religious practices something fragrant and beautiful to experience. I love to attend the *Salāt al-Tarawih* in KL and usually went to *Masjid Dār al-Ehsān* in Ampang. This year, however, I would drive myself to the *Masjid*. Since I was living all alone in the apartment, my morning meal prior to commencing the fast, and my meal with which I broke the fast each day were quite lonely events.

The University *Islām* Antarabangsa (UIA) or International Islamic University of Malaysia invited me to lecture at the PJ campus after the *Salāt al-Tarawih* on the very first night of *Ramadān*. My lecture on the topic, ‘*The Strategic Significance of the Fast of Ramadān*’, dwelt on the relationship between fasting and power. I was delighted to meet once again with my dear friend Professor Abbas, who had recently retired from the post of Dean.

I had lectured a month or two earlier at the main UIA campus in Gombak on ‘*Sūrah al-Kahf and the Modern Age*’ before a select audience of Professors and PhD students, and had succeeded in provoking a Professor from India into a somewhat heated debate. As a consequence of that confrontation I developed a response for those who clung to the view that Gog and Magog had not as yet been released. “*In that case*”, I argued, “*the wall built by Dhūl Qarnain would still be standing.*” I demanded an explanation why no one had ever seen that wall in the 1400 years that had elapsed since the *Qur’ān* was revealed. I also wanted to know why the Professor was not making an effort to locate the wall. My audiences were usually capable of realizing, in an age of ‘Google earth’, that such a wall no longer existed anywhere on earth. I also recognized, as a

consequence of my own study of the blessed *Qur'ān* and *Ahadīth*, that *Dajjāl* was the master-mind who created and fashioned modern secular western civilization, and that Gog and Magog were located within the Jewish-Christian alliance through whom that civilization had emerged in the world. Whoever disagreed with my view of the subject was invited to provide an alternative explanation from the *Qur'ān* and *Ahadīth*.

A Colonel in the Malaysian Armed Forces, now a Major, had become a dear friend ever since I had lectured on '*Jerusalem in the Qur'ān*' at the Malaysian Ministry of Defense some years ago. Whenever I visited Malaysia he would invite me to his *Surau* (i.e., *Musalla*) in the suburb of Bangi to give a talk. He did so on two occasions during this lecture-tour. Allah Most Kind had blessed him and his wife with seven children and he proudly took me to his home which he had bought without any debt, and without any *Ribā*. He also had a bigger vehicle with could accommodate his big family and that, also, was acquired the same way. It filled my heart with joy to witness such a positive impact of my lectures on *Ribā*.

I had been invited by *Masjid Umar bin al-Kahttāb* in the exclusive Damansara Heights suburb of KL to deliver a lecture on the subject of the *Gold Dinār and Silver Dirham* in the context of *Islām and the Future of Money*. Dr Sulaiman Mahboob, Director General of the Prime Minister's Department of Economic Planning chaired the program. At the end of the lecture and the extended question and answer session Dr Mahboob made important comments on the importance of the subject. He lamented the fact that secular studies in economics hardly ever afforded an opportunity for economists to be informed by a Qur'anic perspective on the subject of money. He welcomed the lecture and signaled the need for serious attention to be directed to the subject.

When we sat later to share a simple meal, he joined with others in urging me to write out the lecture and publish it as a book, but they warned me to confine the size to about 50 pages. As I struggled during Ramadan to achieve that target I eventually completed it in 55 pages. We printed 5000 copies which were soon sold out in batches of 1000 copies at a time. We then printed another 5000 copies, and we are now about to print another 3000 copies. In addition the booklet has been translated to *Bahasa Malayu* and is about to be printed in that language as well.

I had warned in that booklet of the imminent possibility of a money meltdown in the following words: *“It is very likely that within a brief time of the publication of this booklet terrible events will unfold in the world of money that would validate our analysis. Hence readers should not delay in assessing the arguments raised and, if found convincing, in searching for and adopting a proper response to the challenge. We assist readers in that effort by offering our own brief response in the last chapter of the booklet.”* The money meltdown in fact commenced just as I was about to leave KL at the end of December on my way back home. It was because of my understanding of the subject of *Dajjāl* that I was able to anticipate for some 15 years prior, that a money meltdown would occur in order to facilitate the replacement of paper money with invisible and intangible electronic money.

THE IMAMS FROM CHINA

*I*t was a truly fascinating and unforgettable experience when I was invited to conduct an extended teaching session on the subject of ‘*The Gold Dinar and Silver Dirham – Islām and the Future of Money*’ for a group of *Imāms* from China. There must have been about thirty of them, and they hailed from all parts of China. None of them could speak English, and so they had an interpreter with them. They were a friendly and jovial group and they

displayed sharp powers of understanding. We probably spent more than three hours together and at the end of it all I formed the impression that they had understood and grasped the subject. My readers would have been spell-bound to observe questions and comments made, and even arguments pursued, in the Chinese Mandarin language with my responses in English, and yet the session proceeded quite smoothly. At the end of the session they all insisted that I must visit their towns and villages in China. “*If you want to see a Muslim Village, come to China*”, they pleaded. And as I prepared to leave, the cell-phone cameras came out and they engaged in a friendly jostle to take photographs with me.

HELP COMES FROM SO MANY

*R*amadān was truly generous to me when help came to make it possible for me to pay my enormous bill from the printery for the several books which had been printed. Someone came forward and bought from me enough of my books to pay the entire bill. He then shipped all the books to Iran and gave them as gifts to members of the Iranian Islamic intelligentsia. Praise is due to Allah Who ever watches over the needs of His servants. Others would make gifts to help meet the considerable expenses of the lecture-tour. But all through my one year of travels there was one group in particular which stayed faithfully with me, intervening at regular intervals to take care of expenses. They were a wonderful group of Bangladeshi professionals resident in Kuala Lumpur, Sydney and elsewhere.

MALACCA - MALAYSIA

*D*uring *Ramadān* I received several invitations for *Iftār* (i.e., the meal with which a day-long fast was broken). One came from the historic

Malaysian city of Malacca. The Portuguese had conquered this city several hundred years ago, and had tried in vain to transform it into a European Christian city.

The Malay people are gifted with a highly-developed aesthetic dimension of their personality and this was demonstrated in their culture. As Muhammad Chisty and his wife drove me down to Malacca I marveled at the excellent condition of the Malaysian highway system which had been built with artistic perfection. I had visited Malacca several times in the past and yet I always felt, as I entered that city, as if I was walking through the pages of history.

My hosts were quite insistent in wanting to know what kind of dinner I would like to have for *Iftār*. I confessed that my stomach was Chinese, Arab, African and even European, but not Indian, Pakistani or Malay. My stomach was not tolerant of highly-spiced food. In the end it was decided that we would have Chinese. But this was certainly not the kind of food served at Chinese fast-food outlets. It was a sophisticated Chinese menu that required considerable expertise to prepare, and Muhammad Chisty's Indonesian wife most certainly had that expertise.

PAKISTAN FOR A SECOND TIME

My daughter in Pakistan complained that she had no memory of ever breaking the fast (of *Ramadān*) or of celebrating 'Eid with her father. And so I made plans to spend the last ten days of *Ramadān* and 'Eid with her in Karachi. I had difficulty in getting a visa for Pakistan on this my second trip to that country in four months. The visa officer at the Pakistan High Commission in KL informed a number of us that since we were in Malaysia on tourist visas we did not qualify for visas to other countries, and that we would have to apply for visas in our home country. I protested, and others joined with me,

and we were eventually allowed to meet with a counselor officer of the High Commission who agreed to issue us with visas. Yet strangely enough when I arrived at the *Quaid-e-Azam* Airport in Karachi the Pakistani Immigration Officer informed me, in a perfect British accent, that citizens of Trinidad and Tobago did not need a visa to enter Pakistan. The British accent came, of course, with the complements of General Parvez Musharraf who had become a willing accomplice in the ‘war on *Islām*’.

I arrived in Karachi just before the commencement of the last ten days of *Ramadān*. My daughter, Hirā, was absolutely delighted to have her father with her in *Ramadān* for the first time ever. She also had no memory of us living together as a family before the divorce with her mother took place.

Shortly after my arrival my former wife surprised me with a request that I take her back as a wife. I was tremendously relieved when she admitted for the first time to our daughter that it was she who had requested the divorce, and that it was I who had always opposed a divorce. Five months later, as this travelogue is being written, remarriage has not taken place.

I devoted the entire two weeks of my stay in Karachi to my daughter and never delivered a single public lecture. I did not even contact QTV to do some more recordings of lectures. Instead we spend endless hours after *Salāt al-Tarawih* every night holding discussions in the apartment in which she and her mother lived. I had bought that apartment in 1982. We reminisced about times gone by, and we recalled events in the life of *Maulānā* Ansari. *Maulānā*’s son, Mustafa, and his last daughter, Nida, joined us every night after the *Salāt*. I spent quite some time in explaining the substance of *Maulānā*’s Islamic thought and in so doing I attempted to delineate the contours of the book that I proposed to write on his life, works and thought. I had wanted to spend some time during my travels in Karachi, Pakistan, in order to conduct research and to gather material for that new book I wanted to write on Maulana Ansari

(1914 – 1974). More than 33 years had passed since his death, and no one had yet undertaken the task of writing such a book. I felt a sense of guilt that I had not myself already done so. Before I left Trinidad the President of the Masjid Jam'iah, City of San Fernando, Trinidad, had insisted that his Jamaat would like to help fund the production of that book.

I attended the *Salāt al-'Eid* at the *Masjid* on the campus of the Aleemiyah Institute of Islamic Studies and shared with *Shaikh* Ali Mustafa Seinpaal of Suriname memories of the times we had spent together as students of the Institute. Ali Mustafa had recently left Trinidad and traveled to Pakistan with his young Trinidadian wife to join the teaching staff of the Institute.

I also prayed for mercy on *Maulānā* Ansari's soul at his grave which is conveniently located on the campus of the Institute.

I traveled back to Kuala Lumpur a few days after *'Eid* and shortly after my return my daughter called on the phone to describe to me the chaos that had overtaken Karachi on the occasion of Benazir Bhutto's return to Pakistan after some eight years of exile. An attempt had been made to assassinate her, and she had survived, but there was rioting on the streets of Karachi. Hira and her mother narrowly escaped grave harm as cars right in front of theirs were set ablaze.

COLOMBO - SRI LANKA

I left in early November on my second Islamic lecture-tour of Sri Lanka. The first visit took place in 2003. The Sri Lankan High Commission in KL refused to give me a visa while quoting the same new rule that I was not eligible since I was in Malaysia on a tourist visa. But when I mentioned that I had been invited to Sri Lanka by Justice Ghafur, a High Court Judge, they quickly issued the visa to me.

As I walked out of the High Commission, which was located on a lonely back street with hardly any traffic, I peered each way in a light drizzle and saw no traffic. But I omitted to repeat the effort as I started to drive my car slowly from the place where it was parked curbside in front of the High Commission. In the meantime a motor cyclist had entered the road and was speeding in the rain. As I pulled out from my parked position he crashed his motor cycle against my front passenger-side door and he went sprawling on the road with the food which he was carrying all scattered on the wet roadway. The impact of the crash was so powerful that my front right tire was punctured. It took the better part of half-an-hour for me to change my tire in the rain and by the time I did so he declined my offer to take him to a nearby hospital so that he could be medically examined. Instead he asked whether I could give him some money with which to repair his motor cycle. How much? I asked. He looked at his motor cycle for some time and then asked for 500 Ringets (about US\$150). I had exactly 500 Ringets in my wallet and I gave it to him.

On my arrival at Colombo Airport I was greeted by many whom I had not met on my previous visit. They took me to the Galadhari Hotel in the heart of Colombo's most prestigious downtown area. It was a Muslim-owned hotel in the city and, therefore served *Halāl* food. I had a spectacular view of the Indian Ocean from my hotel room.

The Northern Tamil insurgency against Sri Lanka's Sinhalese Government had grown worse since my last visit and Colombo's state of insecurity was so perilous that there were armed guards on every floor of the hotel. Cars were regularly stopped at checkpoints on most of Colombo's roads. In fact I was nearly held-up by the Sri Lankan military on one occasion when I forgot to take my passport with me when I left the hotel. As I write this travelogue the news has just reached me of a bomb blast just outside of Colombo which killed a Minister of Government.

Sri Lanka's Muslims were neither Tamil nor Sinhalese and had suffered the most from the insurgency. More than 100,000 Muslims resident in the northern tip of Sri Lanka had been driven out of their homes by the Hindu Tamil insurgents and were now living as refugees in tents. Many had been killed. I recognized that same danger could befall the Muslims of South Africa as well as in my own native island of Trinidad.

My lectures in Colombo were not as well attended as on the last occasion, but this was because of the insecurity that was slowly paralyzing Colombo. In addition, people were perhaps intimidated by the relentless anti-Muslim propaganda that was constantly coming out of television, radio, newspapers around the world. That propaganda offensive must have taken its toll on those who were weak of faith. I concentrated on teaching the subject of *Signs of the Last Day* in which the subject of *Ribā* was firmly located. But I was pleasantly surprised on the occasion of my first public lecture to find the Muslim Governor of Sri Lanka's Eastern Province present. He was invited to address the gathering before my lecture and took the opportunity welcome me to the country. He seemed to have been so impressed by the lecture that he found the time to attend a second lecture as well.

It was while I was in Sri Lanka that I finally began to feel the physical effects of prolonged travel. My right leg began to give way and I started to walk with a limp. I would soon be 66 years of age and had never been athletic and physically active, and so wear and tear of the body was becoming more evident.

KANDY - SRI LANKA

*I*t was when I was taken up the mountains to the central Sri Lankan town of Kandy that I finally had to come to terms with my leg. They were

both swollen and I was experiencing pain while walking. I needed to get a good masseur.

My hosts took me to see the famous Sri Lankan tea plantations. During their colonial rule over Sri Lanka the British had discovered the perfect climate in the mountains for tea to be grown. I was taken on a tour to see the famed Ceylon tea plantations. I saw women dressed in bright colors picking tea leaves which they then put in baskets slung around their waists. They all wore large straw hats which protected them from the sun.

I was then taken to a tea factory which the British had built. A Muslim had bought the factory some eighty years ago. We climbed stairs up to the third level of the building as I was taken on a demonstration through all stages of the process of manufacture of tea. My only regret was that I did not have a walking stick. At the end of that fascinating tour our hosts served us absolutely delicious hot steaming Sri Lankan tea with biscuits.

That same evening I gave my first and only lecture in Kandy on the subject of '*An Islamic Response to the Modern Feminist Revolution*'. My hosts in Kandy were themselves surprised by the packed hall of people who attended the lecture – many of them medical students from a nearby university. At the end of the lecture, however, it was my turn to be unpleasantly surprised as some modernist women, hidden from our gaze behind wooden partitions, were unhappy about my interpretation of *Ahadīth* concerning *Dajjāl* and women, and accused me of being anti-women. They had had an absolutely free day in making every criticism possible of the religious way of life as it pertained to the male-female relationship, but when a religious scholar turned the searchlight on their own feminist revolution and exposed its hollow credentials while demonstrating its link with *Dajjāl*, they could not tolerate such criticism.

I returned to my hotel room that night and restored some tranquility to my heart as I gazed for a long time at the full moon rising above the nearby mountains, and at the silvery waves of hauntingly beautiful moonlight that just kept on flowing ever so gently into the sleeping valley below me.

Sri Lanka is internationally famous as the land of gemstones. My hosts in Kandy took me to a shop that dealt in gemstones. I watched as the employees selected stones for cutting and polishing. I watched as they set stones on rings, etc. It was an extremely interesting experience. When the owner of the gemstone shop learnt that I lived in Trinidad on a street named after the calcite stone, he presented me with a beautiful chunk of calcite as a souvenir of my visit to his shop.

I had learnt on my previous visit to Sri Lanka in 2003 that *Maulānā* Abdul Aleem Siddiqui owned a gemstone shop in Colombo, and that he traded in gemstones as he traveled the earth preaching the religion of *Islām*. Visitors to Sri Lanka were sure to buy pink and blue sapphire stones for their wives, daughters, fiancé's, etc. Even though they were tiny stones of just about one or two carat in weight each, yet they cost a lot of money. I learnt to my surprise that a ruby and a sapphire were the same stone with only a difference in color.

On the drive back to Colombo from Kandy the next day we stopped at a quaint little Muslim town that nestled peacefully in the lush green mountains. We drank coconuts and I was presented with a solid block of about 100 grams of 'Goor', a dark brown solid cake of mollases that one usually got from a sugar cane factory. I remember enjoying that *Goor* as a boy growing up close to the Woodford Lodge sugar cane factory in my hometown of Chaguanas in the island of Trinidad.

MALWANA - SRI LANKA (I renamed it Rambutan country)

The town of Malwana is located at about an hour's drive East of Colombo. It is an old Muslim town and is famous around Sri Lanka for its Rambutans, a delicious fruit which was brought into Sri Lanka from South East Asia. Justice Ghafoor resided in Malwana, and he invited me to have tea at his home prior to my lecture on *Ribā* at a lecture-hall in the town. I had conducted an all-day seminar on *Ribā* at the Ghaladari hotel in Colombo on my previous visit to Sri Lanka, but I found very few in my audience who had attended that seminar. There were some in the audience who were very surprised indeed to hear my views on so-called *Murābaha* transactions of Islamic banks. But no one challenged those views. The lecture on *Ribā* was well-received by a shell-shocked Sri Lankan audience who now understood the link between the burden of ever-rising prices on the one hand, and ever-falling value of money on the other.

At the end of the Sri Lanka lecture-tour I was given the good news that all copies of my new book, ' *Sūrah al-Kahf and the Modern Age* ', were sold out and that there was a waiting list of those who wanted to get a copy. In addition all copies of ' *Jerusalem in the Qur'ān* ' were also sold out, and finally, and not surprisingly for a Buddhist country, all copies of ' *Islām and Buddhism in the Modern World* ' had been sold out.

Although ' *Sūrah al-Kahf and the Modern World* ' had been selling well in KL, it was the Sri Lankan demand for the book that gave the first real sign that this book could become, *Insha Allah*, another best-seller (after ' *Jerusalem in the Qur'ān* ').

KUCHING - SARAWAK

Immediately on my return from Sri Lanka, and without even a day of rest, I had to fly to the city of Kuching in the Malaysian State of Sarawak. A

young man in Kuching had been in correspondence with me by email for a few years, and it was through his persistent efforts that my lecture had been arranged in Kuching. It was only my second visit to this very beautiful city located on the banks of a river. I had been invited to Kuching about 15 years earlier by the former deputy speaker of the State Assembly, Tan Sri Abang Urai, and on arrival at the airport I learnt that I was also the guest of Chief Minister Tiab Mahmoud. This time around it was a young and excited student who arranged for my visit. We did not have permission to deliver a public lecture in Kuching and so my lecture was delivered behind closed doors and before a specially invited audience comprising both men and women. The Malay people are very polite and will never ask hostile questions. They also sit very seriously and respectfully during religious lectures and it takes an effort for a speaker to get them to even smile during a lecture on *Islām*.

As soon as my lecture was over, however, and they had bought copies of my books as well as DVDs of lectures, we sat down in a restaurant for a Malay lunch and it was then that the fun began as they crowded around me seeking my autograph on the books they had bought.

GUESTS FROM LAHORE PAKISTAN

I had guests with me in Kuala Lumpur who had just arrived from Lahore in Pakistan, and so I had to fly to Kuching by an early morning flight, and to fly back the same evening to Kuala Lumpur. Atif Chaudhry was resident in New York when I first met him. He attended a lecture I delivered at one of the several *Masājid* established in that city by Bengali Muslims. The lecture so impacted on his young heart that he remained deeply attached to me since then. He was also in constant contact with by email ever since we both left New York – he to return to his native Lahore and me to return to my

native Trinidad and Tobago. Atif's wife was an IT specialist and they had traveled to KL so that she could attend a specialized IT training course.

I was delighted to have them with me for a few days - in between my lecture-tours of Sri Lanka and Indonesia. Tahirah took over the kitchen to prepare some delicious Pakistani dishes while Atif and I spent long hours discussing the implications of a meltdown of the US dollar which we expected to occur at any time. It was at that time that I got a call from my dearest friend in Malaysia. Abdul Kareem was Singaporean of Yemeni origin. He and his family were settled in Malaysia for many years. We had become dear friends in the early nineties and our friendship had continuously grown ever since. His call to me led to the most unforgettable experience of my entire one year of travel.

THE FASHION SHOW

*A*bdul Kareem invited me to the Kuala Lumpur Islamic Garments Fashion Show. He was one of the most famous designers of silk *Batik* in Malaysia, and was also an ardent Muslim and Sufi, and a man of great piety. He had traveled several times to Bukhara and Samarkand in order to savor the taste of the Naqshbandi Sufi orders in those lands.

I knew that he would only invite me to a show that would be of stimulating interest, and so I asked him to allow me to bring along my guests from Lahore, Atif and his wife, Tahirah.

We got lost while driving around trying to find the KL Convention Center where the fashion show was held, and Abdul Kareem had to send his son, Amir, to meet us at KLCC and to lead us to the Convention Center. That turned out to be the least of my difficulties on that unforgettable day. I had expected to see displays of different pieces of cloth with different *Batik*

designs hanging from walls – not live white women modeling Islamic clothing to the tune of music loud enough to burst your ear drums. We sat in a long hall with chairs on both sides of a long walkway. My wife would later explain to me on the telephone from New York that it was called a ‘cat walk’. But these were not cats, rather they were young female models who walked down the walkway swaying in a strangely cranky way to the music, yet never stumbling and falling down. They would first walk down the walkway and then turn and walk back the opposite way. They all looked as though they had not eaten a meal for the last few months. Most of the female models, but not all, were dressed in *Hijāb* which usually, but not always, covered their heads. Other than the *Hijāb* the Fashion Show had imitated everything that had come from modern western civilization – including the use of the English language in a Malay-speaking city by a European announcer who spoke with a British accent.

It was quite clear that the designers had shown great ingenuity in designing the clothing and headgear, but I felt that men had no place in a design show where women were parading themselves in designer clothing. Abdul Kareem had himself become quite embarrassed because he, too, had no idea that the show would have turned out in the way that it did. We did not wait to see the clothing which he had designed, and left to the great relief of my bursting ear drums. Aisha had a good laugh when I called her later to inform her of my escapade at the fashion show.

But the experience was beneficial since it impressed upon me the extent to which a deeply religious Muslim society such as the Malay could be seduced into imitating a decadent and essentially godless western society.

INDONESIA FOR A SECOND TIME

On my return to KL from Colombo and Kuching I hardly had a few days of rest before I again traveled, this time on my second visit to enchantingly beautiful Indonesia.

I took with me on the aircraft a few hundred copies of my *Gold Dinār* booklet as well as a complete set of my new books and a set of DVDs of my lectures. The *Gold Dinār* booklet was put on sale for Rupees 5000 each (about US 75 cents each) with proceeds of sales going as a gift to the *Muslim Mashrakat Antarabangsa*, but even at that price there were those who could not afford to buy it.

I was taken from the airport straight to the home of my hosts, the Indonesian woman who was married to the Muslim Englishman. It was for them that I had brought the copies of the new books as well as the DVDs of my lectures. When my hostess learnt about the condition of my leg she immediately summoned an Indonesian village masseur who gave me three massages over the next six days. That man knew his work very well. He gave me something to drink which thinned my blood. It was very bitter and tasted awful. But the massages had a healing effect on my leg, and both swelling and pain disappeared.

A Turkish couple resident in Australia so wished to meet with me that they flew to Jakarta to join me in the lecture-tour. I went myself to the airport to greet them.

On this second lecture-tour of Indonesia a better program of lectures had been arranged. The highlight was an address at the Indonesian Islamic University located in Chiputat in Jakarta. I was invited to address a seminar on '*Islām and the Future of Money*'. The seminar was held in the Faculty of Economics in the sprawling campus of the University and attracted mainly post-graduate students as well as a few Professors. As usual there was quite an

element of surprise when an Islamic scholar used the *Qur'ān* and *Hadīth* to analyze and expose the fraudulent nature of the international monetary system that had emerged out of modern western civilization, and to then proceed to anticipate the dramatic emergence of a new monetary system that would be even more fraudulent than the present system of non-redeemable paper currencies that is about to disappear.

My Indonesian hostess and her husband decided to take advantage of my presence to invite a gathering of friends and family to their spacious home. My lecture on '*An Islamic View of the Return of Jesus*' naturally focused on events now unfolding in the Holy Land that had been explained in my book entitled '*Jerusalem in the Qur'ān*'. But the intense session of questions and answers that followed the lecture impressed upon me the need to write another book that would narrate, analyze and explain the events pertaining to the return of Jesus ('*alaihi al-Salām*') in the way that a narrative/story ought to be told. I will soon commence writing that book *Insha Allah*.

On my previous visit to Indonesia I had been introduced to the Muslim women's magazine entitled *Al-Nūr*. The editor had requested an interview of me and I had agreed to her request. On this visit the interview finally took place. We met in an Indonesian restaurant for the interview and I was quite impressed by the intensity of faith that she displayed. She could even have been described as militant in the manner that she responded to the oppression to which Muslims were everywhere subjected.

Before the interview could take place, however, I met in the same restaurant with Zaim Saidi whose acquaintance I had made in the *Gold Dinār* conference held in KL last July. He was in charge of an Indonesian *Gold Dinār* project and was continuously lecturing on the subject in different parts of the country. I was quite impressed by his presentation in the conference. We had a beneficial exchange of views in our meeting in the restaurant as I

took the opportunity to present him with a copy of my booklet on ‘*The Gold Dinār and Silver Dirham – Islām and the Future of Money*’.

I was anticipating the meltdown of the US dollar and, with it, the rest of the world of paper money, and suggested to him that Indonesian rice farmers could be taught the strategy of demanding *Gold Dinārs* in payment for their rice. In the event of refusal of that demand they should then use ‘rice’ itself as money in the same way that ‘dates’ were used as money in Madina whenever there was a shortage of gold and silver coins in the market.

My management consultant friend in KL was so impressed with my views on the subject of money, as well as with my booklet on the future of money, that he flew from KL to Jakarta to organize a private dinner/discussion in a local hotel. He invited a number of important personalities and we had a pleasant evening. But the intense brainstorming session that he craved for never took place for two reasons. Firstly the language used for discussion was English whereas a brainstorming session required the use of the local language. Secondly it appeared that some of the participants felt intimidated by my presence. Perhaps they would have felt more comfortable in discussing the subject had I not been present.

My old and dear friend, Luqman Hakim Landy, was in his native Australia when I visited Indonesia on the previous occasion. On this occasion he organized a reception in my honor at his tiny Malapat Village in the East Javan province of Banten. It was a very long and very beautiful drive through the Javanese countryside, and the Turkish husband and wife visitors who had traveled from Melbourne to be with me, thoroughly enjoyed the drive. Luqman’s third wife was a native of the village and the villagers turned out in full force to greet me. Luqman took me to the house he had built in the village with \$9000 Australian dollars. It was a model of simplicity. We sat down to a delicious Indonesian lunch and enjoyed even more delicious fruits, and then

joined the merry reception which was already in progress. Villagers know how to have innocent fun, and they were having a lot of fun by the time we joined them in the reception tent.

Luqman translated my brief talk to Bahasa Indonesia, a language which he had learnt at university in Australia, and it was after this that the real fun started.

Luqman's wife wanted to have a family photograph (i.e., she, her husband and their two children) taken with me. After that photograph was taken, every single villager, male and female, young and old, wanted a photograph with me. The amazing thing was that they all had cell phones with cameras, and they all knew how to use them, whereas I had never as yet taken a photograph using a cell phone, and I knew nothing about the subject. The village women showed no signs of shyness and bashfulness in demanding photographs with me, and that turned my theories of femininity upside down.

My trip by air back to KL from Jakarta turned out to be an unforgettable experience. My business management friend and his secretary were with me on that return KLM flight. The Turkish husband and wife team also arrived at the airport at the same time to take their flight back to Melbourne. We learnt to our distress that our KLM flight which was scheduled to depart Jakarta at 7 pm was indefinitely delayed. With great difficulty and quite some running in the airport on a bad leg we finally got on board an Emirates flight that landed in KL well after midnight. I then took a taxi to Muhammad Chisty's home in Kajang to collect my car and to drive it back myself to my apartment in Ampang. I must have reached Kajang close to 3 in the morning. I was naturally totally exhausted as I drove back to Ampang. When I had reached close to my apartment the car shut down. I then remembered the famous expression "*when it rains - it pours*". I had to pull my suitcase behind me as I walked the remaining half of a mile to my apartment. I learnt later that the

gasoline meter in the car was malfunctioning and there was no gas in the car although the meter indicated that the tank was half full.

DHAKA - BANGLADESH

After just two or three days of rest in KL I was again on the road traveling to Dhaka. The Bangladesh High Commission acted in the same way as the others in refusing me a visa because I was in Malaysia on a tourist visa. But my friend, Alamgir, in Sydney, got another Bengali friend in Abu Dhabi to contact a Bangladeshi Minister of Government who, in turn, called someone in another Bangladeshi High Commission, who then intervened with the Mission in KL to ensure that I got my visa.

A young man in Bangladesh, Tashrifur Rahman, discovered my website and was instantly attracted to the material stored. He sent me an email and we started corresponding. We discussed the subject of a lecture-tour of Bangladesh and he immediately volunteered to assist both with respect to accommodation as well as arranging a program of lectures.

Alamgir in Sydney was experiencing difficulties in arranging my lecture-tour of Bangladesh because Qutbuddin *Bhai*, who had played a key role in arranging my last lecture-tour, had traveled abroad. Alamgir contacted Tashreef and we soon had an organizing committee in place, and then a lecture-tour was arranged for early December.

I took a few sets of my new books to Dhaka as gifts, and I also took a box filled with my *Gold Dinār* booklet which we distributed free of charge.

A Muslim sister in Dhaka, Tahmina *Apa*, who lived alone with her young daughter wanted me to stay as a guest in her home. She got a cousin to come with her husband to stay in her home, and she then extended the invitation to me. The organizing committee, which included Tashreef, felt that it would

safer for me to stay at her flat rather than his. My wife, Aisha, in NY gave her approval and I flew to Dhaka to be a guest in her home. It was a decision from which I benefited in ways that I could not have possibly imagined.

The word ‘*Apa*’, in Bengali Muslim culture, is a respectful title with which to address an older woman. That priceless cultural wealth is found in Indonesian Muslim culture where the similar term used is ‘*Ibo*’, in Pakistan it is ‘*Baji*’ and in Malaysia one finds the title ‘*Siti*’. I was in a quandary for quite some time when I found people addressing me in Indonesia as *Pa* Imran. Had I become father to so many people? In fact the word was pronounced ‘*Pa*’ but spelt ‘*Pak*’ and it was a title of respect. ‘*Bhai*’, on the other hand, meant ‘brother’ and was used in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Tahmina had a very spacious flat – narrow and very long. The guest bedroom was located at one end of the long flat, while the other bedrooms were located at the other end. In between were the sitting room, dining room, kitchen, etc.

I found to my dismay that she had three Bengali girls working as maids in her home, and I naturally enquired why she needed three maids when she lived alone with a daughter. Would one not have been enough? Her response astonished me. She replied that she used to have nine such girls in her home, and that if she had a bigger home she would have had more than nine. I could not understand her conduct and asked her to kindly explain to me that which I could not understand. It was when she offered her explanation that I finally understood the *Hadīth* of the blessed Prophet (*sallallahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*) that among the Signs of the Last Day was that “*one man would have to maintain fifty women*”.

She explained that *Ribā* had ripped the Bangladeshi economy apart to such an extent that the whole country was in the grip of poverty. However, the

little money that circulated in the economy was confined to the cities, and it was the villages of the countryside that really experienced biting destitution. She went on to explain that in a state of destitution women were more vulnerable to exploitation than men. She then pointed to a 15 year old girl in her home who, she said, had been married to a man from the city who offered a dowry to her impoverished father that he could not refuse. The man enjoyed the virgin girl for a month and then abandoned her to go in search of another such girl. The girls were cheap, and he could afford to satiate his lust with any number of such girls. Sometimes such a bride would become pregnant, and was left to fend not only for herself but also for her baby. The villages of Bangladesh were filled with such young female shipwrecks. In fact they resembled junkyards since no one would then marry such girls.

Tahmina explained that she would go to the countryside and search for such girls and take them into her home. She would then search for a way for them to get a new life.

I immediately understood that the blessed Prophet was referring to women reduced to destitution by *Ribā* when he prophesied that “*one man would have to maintain fifty (such) women*”. Indeed, while I was in Bangladesh the meltdown of the US dollar appeared to have commenced. As a consequence I was right on target in explaining this difficult *Hadīth* at this time in this way. The very ominous implication of this prophecy was that the masses around the world would eventually experience unprecedented poverty and destitution. The meltdown of the US dollar and consequent universal rise in prices was pointing in precisely that direction, and yet there was such profound silence from the scholars of *Islām* and from the different sects which jealously guarded their turf and would not allow me to teach in *Masājid* under their control. One has even banned me in Trinidad.

On the occasion of my first visit to Bangladesh in 2003, someone had come forward to offer to translate '*Jerusalem in the Qur'ān*' to the Bangla language. My second visit to Bangladesh brought joy to my heart when I saw the Bengali translations of two of my books, '*Jerusalem in the Qur'ān*' and '*The Prohibition of Ribā in the Qur'ān and Sunnah*', which had been published in Dhaka since my last visit. I was pleasantly surprised to discover that a Muslim sister who was a medical doctor had translated the book on *Ribā*.

There was such a demand for the few hundred copies of the *Gold Dinār* booklet I had brought with me from KL that they had to be rationed to ensure that there were a few copies left for distribution at each lecture.

Alamgir planned my entire lecture-tour of Bangladesh for me from his base in Sydney. His team of volunteers in Dhaka worked very well, but none worked harder than Bashar. He was a Bengali Muslim who had lived in Australia for many years before returning home. He had a business in electrical supplies but he literally took leave of his business for the entire time that I was in Bangladesh in order to devote himself exclusively to affairs connected to my lecture-tour.

A number of lectures were delivered in the auditorium of the Bangladesh Institute of Business Administration, and a few more were delivered in various *Masājid*. As usual, whenever someone came to attend a lecture he kept on attending all the other lectures.

The traffic jams of Dhaka appeared to be even worse than those in Jakarta. And yet the Bengali and Indonesian people appeared to have infinite patience and I never encountered instances of road rage which resulted in fights and with people cursing, insulting and threatening each other. Such conduct was usual in New York where I had lived for ten years. Indeed it was

not uncommon in New York for people affected by road rage to take out guns and shoot at each other. Yet on several occasions in Dhaka a simple 15 minute drive from the residence where I was staying to the lecture hall took as much as 2 hours. And on arrival at the lecture-hall I would have to give the usual apologies for being late.

I visited the boy's school for memorization of the *Qur'ān* that had been established by the late Professor Dr Syed Ali Ashraff. He and his wife were both buried on the premises and I offered a *Duah* at their graves. The Principal of the school detained me for some two hours until it was time for the *Salāt al-Zuhr*. He insisted that I should give a talk to the staff and students in the *Masjid* after the *Salāt*. Then when that was over he invited me to share with him the same simple peas and rice lunch that all the students were having.

Again and again the Indonesian and Bengali people caused me to feel so proud of Muslim society. I had grown up in a western society where people lived lives that were more centered on the individual than the society. Yet here were people who were miserably poor and who still preserved natural dignity, a wondrous and entirely natural hospitality, and fraternal warmth which they shared so freely with others. Praise is due to Allah Most High Who gave us *Islām* as a religion which makes its people noble, generous and hospitable even when they are miserably poor. Readers may perhaps now understand me when I once said that *the dust of Lahore is more precious to me than all the skyscrapers of Manhattan*. I pray that those Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, Egyptians, etc., who left their native land to seek the good life in USA, Britain, Australia and other such lands whose pastures are so green, would come back home and live with the poor masses of their own lands whose lives demonstrate greater nobility than anything that '*a sun rising from the west*' could ever produce.

Before I left the institution I reminded the Principal that August 2008 would mark Dr Syed Ali Ashraf's tenth death anniversary, and I hoped that appropriate commemorative functions would be arranged in the various cities of the world in which he had served the mission of *Islām* with such great devotion.

The learned and serious audiences who attended my lectures in Dhaka provoked me into taking up subjects I had elsewhere avoided. Such, for example, was the subject of the divine punishment ordained in *Islām* for the sin of *Zinā* (i.e., adultery and fornication). *Maulānā* Ansari held the view that the punishment was a public flogging, and I entirely agreed with my teacher and argued the case in support of that view. Surprisingly my Bangladeshi audience raised no objections.

Then there was the question of coded verses of the *Qur'ān* (*al-Mutashābihāt*) that were referred to in *Sūrah ale-'Imrān*. A misplaced comma in the Arabic text of the *Qur'ān* (punctuation marks were not revealed) led to the conclusion that only Allah knew the meaning of such verses of the *Qur'ān*. I argued that such a conclusion made no sense whatsoever and was manifestly false. Rather, the comma was misplaced and the verse really declared that both Allah, as well as those firmly grounded in knowledge, knew the meaning of such coded verses of the *Qur'ān*.

A Bangladeshi economist/banker had been awarded the Nobel Prize for his response to poverty in Bangladesh in the form of his Grameen Bank. The argument was that since the exorbitant rates of interest in Bangladesh could reach as high as 300%, Grameen was actually being charitable to the poor when it lent money at a much lower rate of interest. It was such a manifestly false and ignorant argument that I did not think it deserved a response. Those who were persuaded that Grameen Bank and its founder should be honored for such a response to *Ribā* were a people who, deaf, dumb and blind, were more

misguided than cattle. I found to my surprise that many Bangladeshis had turned away from Noble Prize's Muhammad Yunus, and were openly critical of his Grameen Bank which was now enforcing foreclosures on the property of the poorest people in the country. There were so many in Bangladesh who were poor, but they were not stupid, and they recognized the award of the Nobel Prize to a Muslim by enemies of *Islām* to be the kiss of death

Among those who visited me while I was in Dhaka was a physiotherapist who examined my leg and then recommended that I deliver my lectures while sitting rather than standing. For the next three months of my year-long lecture-tour I lectured while sitting.

A Bangladeshi judge also visited me and we had a very long and very important exchange of views. I was surprised to learn of the extent to which the study of law in Bangladesh had been secularized. I discussed with him the law of divorce in *Islām*, and we both agreed that there was need for the subject to be addressed from a new perspective.

The *Qur'ān* had delivered a law of divorce that was wise and compassionate. A single pronouncement of divorce (*Talāq*) initiated a process which could culminate in about three month's time in a termination of marriage. During that period of waiting the *Qur'ān* made provisions for a process of reconciliation, and if no reconciliation were to take place then the marriage would be automatically dissolved at the end of the period.

Sometimes, however, a divorce could take place and the couple could later regret it. It was perfectly clear to many commentators of the *Qur'ān* (but not to *Maulānā* Maududi) that in such circumstances the Qur'anic declaration, "*divorce is twice*", was made in the context of divine permission for *remarriage* of a divorced couple, and for even a second *remarriage* if a second divorce were to take place after the first remarriage. It was only in the event

of a third divorce after a second *remarriage* that (a third) *remarriage* was prohibited unless and until the divorced woman was married to someone else, that marriage was consummated, and she had subsequently become single. In other words the wise and compassionate law of divorce in the *Qur'ān* functioned as follows:

- a pronouncement of divorce (*Talāq*) is made;
- if there is no reconciliation by the end of period waiting then marriage is terminated;
- the blessed *Qur'ān* permits *remarriage* if the divorced couple regret their divorce and wish to be reunited;
- the couple *remarry* but then divorce for a second time; they then regret that second divorce as well and wish to be reunited;
- the blessed *Qur'ān* permits them to *remarry* for a second time;
- they *remarry* for a second time and then divorce for the third time; they then regret that third divorce and wish to be reunited;
- the blessed *Qur'ān* now prohibits a third *remarriage* in the specific context in which *remarriage* had twice been effected;
- the blessed *Qur'ān* lays down the law that *remarriage* would only be permitted if the woman were to marry someone other than her former husband, and that marriage is consummated and she then becomes single.

When we applied *Maulānā* Ansari's *Usūl al-Tafsīr* which gave precedence to the *Qur'ān* over the *Hadīth*, it was clear that no *Hadīth* could possibly have the effect of destroying this wise and compassionate law of divorce in the *Qur'ān*. Yet this is precisely what had happened to the law of divorce in *Islām* through precedence being given to *Hadīth* over the *Qur'ān*. As a consequence of defective legal reasoning the ridiculous situation had now arisen in which a man could make three simultaneous pronouncements of

divorce and get rid of his wife instantaneously and irrevocably. And if legal voices were to be raised querying the validity of simultaneous pronouncements he simply had to space the pronouncements apart and the same result could be achieved within an hour or a day.

In establishing law on the basis of alleged *Hadīth* and, in the process, giving to *Ahadīth* a status that superseded the *Qur'ān*, Islamic scholars had committed a blunder which effectively nullified the wise and compassionate law of divorce in the *Qur'ān*.

GAJIPUR – BANGLADESH

My host in Bangladesh, the indefatigable Bashar, arranged for me to have a night and day of rest in the ancient and historic town of Gajipur, which was about two hours drive away from Dhaka. A friend of his had bought several acres of country-side farming land in Gajipur and had built a farm there. He very kindly invited me to spend a little time resting on his farm. On our way to Gajipur Bashar surprised me. We stopped at the Gajipur district court. The judge who was in charge of the court had about a dozen magistrates under his supervision, and he was no other than our friend who had visited me one week earlier. He then surprised me by suspending the work of the entire court and summoning about 50 officers, including the magistrates, to the conference room so that I could address them. I spoke extempore on '*The Qur'ān and Law*' and used *Maulānā* Ansari's contribution to *Usūl al-Tafsīr* to argue that law, as derived from the *Qur'ān* and *Hadīth*, must also be formulated with that method which seeks to locate the total meaning of a subject before seeking to formulate a specific law. That total meaning, in turn, may elude grasp if one does not study a subject with a multi-disciplinary approach. In addition, and most important of all, was the need to resolve the vexing problem of conflict between *Qur'ān* and *Hadīth*. The method through

which such problems were to be resolved was through recognition of the *Qur'ān* as the supreme authority in *Islām*, and through consequent faithful adherence to the *Qur'ān* until such time, if ever, that the conflict with a *Hadīth* could be resolved.

There were horses, cows, goats, sheep, chicken, ducks and guard dogs on the farm. My host had also dug a pond on the farm, and with flowers in full bloom all around the farm house, one had to pause in wonder and slowly absorb the beauty of an already pleasant and serene countryside. It was winter in Bangladesh and I was offered a jacket for warmth as we climbed to the roof of the farm house to perform our *Salāt al-Maghrib*. I was very hungry and could not understand the delay in having dinner. In fact it was not until past nine at night, and long past *Salāt al-Ishā*, that I was finally invited to walk over to an adjoining building for a truly delicious Bengali dinner.

It was thus quite late at night when I finally settled down under a very thick blanket for a night of sleep. But I then got a surprise like no other. I was using my host's bedroom, and there beside his bed lying on the side table was his gun or, rather, pistol. I reasoned to myself, as I went to sleep, and my gentle readers might agree as well, that with a gun beside me and with guard dogs in the yard I should be able to get a good night's sleep. And that I did. When I woke up a few hours later from sound sleep, the gun was still so reassuringly there beside the bed. Had my wife been with me I was sure that she would not have slept for even a brief moment all night long!

The next morning Gajipur's winter mist clung to me while wrapping itself all around me as I climbed again to the roof of the farmhouse. From that height I beheld a view that transported me back to fairyland with mist in my eyes and mist in my heart.

It was the day of *Jumu'ah* and my host took me to the village *Masjid* to attend the *Salāt al-Jumu'ah*. The *Masjid* was built with mud walls and had a thatched roof. Before the *Salāt* could commence there was the usual collection and I could hear coins making a musical 'ting-a-ling' as they fell into the open tin-cup that was being passed around. The villagers were too poor to offer a currency note as a donation, hence the 'ting-a-ling' of coins.

As usual, there were no women attending *Salāt* in the *Masjid*. The men would, of course, pay a bitter price one day for this unjust denial of rights to women to pray in the *Masjid*, and to pray, in addition, in the same space as men (but behind them) and without any barriers or partitions separating them from the men. It would not be long before the feminist revolution would so impact on the world of *Islām* that *Masājid* for women would be established everywhere and women would lead the *Salāt* and deliver the sermon from the *Mimbar*. When that day came the men would have only themselves to blame.

I respectfully declined the village *Imām's* invitation to conduct the *Salāt al-Jumu'ah*. It was good that I did so because he proceeded to deliver his *Khutbah al-Jumu'ah* in the Bengali language. After the *Salāt* was over, the villagers all crowded around me in the open dirt courtyard of the *Masjid* and sure enough a few cellular phones with cameras made an appearance and villagers started taking photographs with me.

It was with profound sadness that I said goodbye to Bangladesh. On both occasions that I had visited this beautiful country and these wonderful people I had fallen in love with both the country and the people. The only other country that had so moved my emotions was Indonesia.

BACK TO KUALA LUMPUR

When I returned to Kuala Lumpur from Bangladesh I still had one more lecture-tour of Penang to complete before I could call it a day and start packing for my long trip back home. My hosts in Penang organized a final lecture with the provocative title: “*Abraham and Satan – The Role of Reason in Religion*”. I had delivered a lecture on this subject in Singapore some twenty years earlier and they got to know about it. One of the members of IPSI in Penang had signaled his desire to write a Master’s Degree thesis that would focus on my eschatology. He wanted to fill a theoretical gap in his understanding of my thought and hence he chose that lecture-topic.

In addition, a Professor at the University Sains Malaysia who had been attending most of my lectures in Penang was successful in arranging for me to lecture at the university on the topic, “*The Grand Design of Money Creation in the Modern World*”. After both these lectures were delivered I made my weary way back to Kuala Lumpur with just about 10 days left to pack in preparation for giving up my apartment and the car which had been loaned to me for so long. My Malaysian Airlines flight to Cape Town was scheduled for December 28th 2007. I had left my home with the firm intention of staying away for at least a year and, if possible, for a longer period of time than that. And the time had finally arrived for me to begin my long journey back home.

There were many farewell dinners, lunches and even breakfast. Professor Dr Malik Badri, the eminent Sudanese Islamic scholar of Psychology, had just arrived in KL from the Islamic University of Islamabad and as we sat for dinner I shared with him my new explanation of the important verse (49) of the *Qur’ān* located in *Sūrah al-Māidah*. In my explanation of the verse Allah Most High prohibited Muslims from taking *only such Jews and Christians as their friends and allies who, themselves, were friends and allies of each other*. That Jewish-Christian alliance that was anticipated in the *Qur’ān* 1400 years ago had now emerged in Europe, and it was that alliance which had created

modern secular western civilization and was now waging unjust war on *Islām* on behalf of the Euro-Jewish State of Israel. Dr Badri responded with complete agreement and acceptance of that new explanation of the Qur’anic verse. I was reassured by his response.

I also had a farewell dinner with another eminent Sudanese Islamic scholar, Professor Dr Mudassar Abdur Raheem, who was an old friend. I invariably benefited from the company of those more learned than I am, and I treasured the opportunity to spend some time in their company.

The major problem that still remained to be solved was that of obtaining a South African visa permitting me to enter that country on my way back home. The South African High Commission in Kuala Lumpur flatly refused a visa on the grounds that I was in Malaysia on a tourist visa. They insisted that I had to seek a visa from the High Commission that was located in Kingston, Jamaica. I called Jamaica on the phone and also corresponded by email until the matter was resolved. The High Commission in Jamaica instructed the High Commission in Kuala Lumpur to issue me the visa.

My landlord had been very kind to me. On two occasions when I did not have the funds to pay my rent on time he gave me extra time to pay. My rent was due on the tenth of every month, and since I was traveling on December 27th and I would be occupying the apartment for only 17 days in December, he did not charge me rent for the month of December. May Allah Most Kind bless him and his family for their kindness. *Āmīn!*

A VISITOR FROM SINGAPORE

*J*ust before I gave up the apartment in order to leave for Cape Town, my dear friend, Hassan Mahmoud, arrived from Singapore to pay me a second visit. On his first visit in early April I had to arrange for him to stay in a hotel

since I had not as yet obtained an apartment, but on this occasion I was happy to have him with me in my apartment. Hassan, a taxi driver, was part of a wonderful circle of students and friends that I have in Singapore. He was Chinese-Malay while his wife was Chinese. They had three beautiful daughters who had grown up over the years into young distinctly Chinese ladies. They were little children when I first met them. I have invited this family time and again to visit Aisha and I in Trinidad. If they finally arrive in Trinidad after I have been called away from this world I pray that those who read this travelogue would welcome them and ensure that they have a happy and comfortable stay.

I had sent a shipment of my new books to Singapore and my students and friends in that island-State had been marketing them by hand. Hassan now brought for me the proceeds of sales. The entire shipment had been sold out, and that money came just in time to pay for the second print of '*Sūrah al-Kahf and the Modern Age*'.

CAPE TOWN FOR THE SECOND TIME

I had spent the entire month of January in Cape Town five years earlier in 2003, and I had marveled at Cape Town's summertime weather. Someone had made an entire three-bedroom house available to me in the Rondebosch East suburb and it was heavenly to go for walks in the morning after *Fajr* with the Table Mountain straight ahead of me. Now for a second time I was going spend the entire month of January in this city and I thanked Allah Most High for having made that possible. I would like to encourage readers to visit Cape Town in January, but I must warn that Cape Town is inundated with visitors during summertime and rents can be astronomical.

The flat which had been promised to me had unfortunately become unavailable and arrangements were made for me to be accommodated instead in a beautifully constructed three-bedroom house. The house was vacant because the owner and his family had to move in to another house in order to take care of his ailing mother.

My wife was prepared to fly from New York to join me in Cape Town but we had to cancel such a plan since it would have been too expensive. Instead I invited my dear Singaporean student, Hasbullah, who was studying at the Dallas (Islamic) College in Cape Town, to spend the month with me in the house. We would make our own breakfast everyday, and our only other meal for the day would be either sent to us or we would be invited out for the meal. I gave strict instructions to my reception committee to ensure that there should be no compromise on the strict dietary rule of only one meal other than breakfast.

Mogamat Abrahams, who had successfully and single-handedly established and maintained the website www.imranhosein.org, took charge of planning and organizing my lecture-tour of beautiful Cape Town for which I had allocated the entire month of January 2008. He successfully recruited some of the members of the *Aleemiyah-Ansari Halaqa* in Cape Town to join with him in a reception committee, and with help from others such as Mahdi Krael, this group organized the most successful program of lectures of my entire one year of travels to so many different countries and cities. I do believe that in times to come that would be far removed from this age, the wonderful team of young men and their wives would reminisce about an unforgettable January when they successfully organized this Cape Town lecture-tour.

An important reason for the great success in organizing the Cape Town lecture-tour was the South African government's non-interference in the affairs of the South African Muslim community. Shirazdeen was confronted

by significant obstacles created by the State when organizing by lectures in KL. Mogamat faced no such difficulties in Cape Town.

We met at Ghulam's home to discuss plans for the month-long lecture-tour. It was Ghulam's late father who had been appointed *Khalīfa* by *Maulānā* Ansari in the late '50s. And it was at this very home that the weekly *Halaqa al-Zikr* was sometimes held ever since. Ghulam had returned to his ancestral village in India to get his wife who turned out to have a PhD in making tea. Her *Masalla Chai* was so delicious that I looked forward to visits to Ghulam's home where I could enjoy that delicious tea. I even learnt her recipe and method of making that spice tea and started to make it myself.

The group was merciful to me by allocating a few free days for rest after my arrival in Cape Town at the end of December. But when a student is trained by *Maulānā* Dr Ansari, he sometimes loses the capacity to rest. And so I used my few free days to write the essay '*A Bhutto is a Bhutto – A Different View of Benazir Bhutto's Assassination*'. In fact I was working on the essay when I went to sleep on the night of December 31st and then went to the *Masjid* next morning for *Salāt al-Fajr* without any consciousness that Pope Gregory's 'old year' had ended and 'new year' had commenced. The essay was placed on my website and quickly circled the globe. Some people misunderstood the essay and concluded, falsely so, that I was a supporter of the Bhuttos – father and daughter. I have attached that essay at the end of this travelogue for the benefit of readers.

By the time I arrived in Cape Town I had sufficiently damaged the Achilles tendon of my right foot that I needed a walking stick to help ease the pain while walking. As I stepped out with my newly-purchased walking stick I made fun of myself with the claim that I had now become a real *Shaikh*. But there was a very serious cutting edge to the frivolity since it was clear that many Muslims had lost the capacity to recognize an '*Ālim*' (i.e., a scholar

whose scholarship was established on the foundations of the revealed Truth). One could even hear the absolutely false and ridiculous statement that someone had completed an ‘*Ālim* course at a *Dār al-‘Ulūm* and had graduated as a *Maulānā*.

One of my first engagements in Cape Town was to attend the ‘Slave Day’ function commemorating Cape Town’s experience of European enslavement of Africans and Malays from Indonesia. The function was held on Wednesday January 2nd at a building known as Slave Lodge where slaves used to be housed, bought and sold. A non-Muslim Euro-South African scholar who had a PhD in Islamic Studies cleverly sought to equate European slavery with so-called Islamic slavery and to then denounce them both with the same breath. I responded to that falsehood by reminding the audience that Prophet Muhammad (*sallallahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*) had himself commanded “*give your slaves the same food to eat that you yourself ate, and the same clothes to wear that you yourself wore*”. Many verses of the blessed *Qur’ān* had declared the freeing of slaves to be an act of great ethical merit. And wherever in Islamic civilization slavery had existed it had been dismantled in such a way that the freed slaves had been successfully integrated in society and it was no longer possible to distinguish between ex-slaves and the rest of society. The difference with European slavery was such that even to this day there were two Americas, one the permanently poor America of ex-slaves who still faced discrimination and racism, and the other was the permanently rich America of ex-slave masters who still constituted the elite of the society. Equivalence of European slavery with so-called Islamic slavery was false.

MAULANA SIDDIQUI’S GRAND-DAUGHTER

I had lunch with Nuri Siddiqui and her British mother at Ghulam’s home the next day. On the occasion of my South African lecture-tour of 2001

(just after 9/11) I was about to deliver a lecture in Durban when a European woman dressed in *Hijāb* approached me and offered the respectful greeting, *Assalaamu ‘alaikum!* She then politely introduced herself to me as *Maulānā* ‘Abdul ‘Aleem Siddiqui’s grand-daughter. I thought to myself that if she, a European woman, could be *Maulānā* Siddiqui’s grand-daughter then ‘a cow could also jump over the moon’. But then she explained that her father was Jilani Siddiqui, *Maulānā*’s eldest son, and I then recalled that Jilani had married a British woman.

This European woman who had greeted me at that time was Nūri, Jilani’s daughter. Nūri had developed quite some skill in conducting Islamic radio programs and was a well-known personality on South African Islamic radio channels. We now met again after a few years and she requested permission to interview me on radio on the subject of my new book, ‘*Sūrah al-Kahf and the Modern Age*’. The interview was scheduled to take place in about two weeks’ time.

That same evening I attended the *Halaqa al-Zikr* of the Aleemiyah-Ansari spiritual order that was conducted every *Jumu’ah* without fail, sometimes at Ghulam’s home and sometimes elsewhere.

ISLAMIC SPIRITUALITY

My month-long lecture-tour of Cape Town featured public lectures that were delivered night after night at different *Masajid*. The very first lecture, held at the historic *Habibiah Masjid*, was on the provocative topic: ‘*The Strategic Importance of Islamic Spirituality*’. It provoked the management of Cape Town’s *Masjid Azzawiyah* to cancel my lecture that was to take place at that venue a few days later. Let me explain the controversy.

I argued that the supreme goal of Sufism (or *Tasawwuf*) was the acquisition of *Nūr* (i.e., light) from Allah. It was with *Nūr* that the believer could penetrate the *reality* of things, and this was emphatically so in respect of all that pertained to the *Fitnah* of *Dajjāl* and, hence, to the subject of ‘*Signs of the Last Day*’. Yet I found, time and again, that even Sufi *Shuyūkh* (i.e., *Shaikhs*) displayed the same innocence as the *Wahhabi/Salafi, Deobandi, Tableegh Jama’at*, etc., in respect of recognizing some of the *Fitnah* of *Dajjāl*. They could not recognize the elementary fact that *Dajjāl* had been released into the world long ago and that we were now facing the fiercest stage of his attacks. They could not recognize the Gog and Magog world-order that now controlled the whole world in its impregnable grip, nor could they recognize the *Harām* status of modern non-redeemable paper currency, the back-door *Ribā* involved in the so-called *Murābaha* transactions of Islamic banking. They were wrong on the matter of the punishment for adultery and fornication in *Islām*, the subject of abrogated revelations, etc.

In my own island of Trinidad an Islamic financial institution was lending money on interest while disguising it as a sale (i.e., so-called *Murābaha*), and was doing so from the very compound of a *Masjid Jāmi’ah* (i.e., *Jama Masjid*). Yet there were many who had a long record of association with a Sufi Order and could not recognize that *Ribā* which had entered the very house of Allah.

The Sufi methodology and technique for the acquisition of *Nūr* was built on the *Baiyyah* with a Sufi *Shaikh* who had received *Khilāfah* from a previous *Shaikh*, and so on, until the *Silsila* (i.e., chain) stretched back to the blessed Prophet (*sallallahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*) himself and then, finally to Allah Most High. The *Nūr* came from Allah Most High through the blessed Prophet and through the *Silsila* of *Shuyukh* to the last *Shaikh* and then to the spiritual disciple.

Dr Muhammad Iqbal had lamented, more than eighty years ago, the inadequacy of the Sufi response to the challenges of the modern age, and had called for a new methodology and technique for the pursuit of Islamic spirituality in the modern age. I argued in my lecture that *Maulānā* Dr Ansari was impressed by Iqbal, and that it was for this reason, in my opinion, that he died without appointing a *Khilāfah* from amongst his many accomplished students and disciples.

Maulānā Dr Ansari appeared, instead, to have patiently nurtured and developed his best students to assume the responsibility of responding to Iqbal's call for a new methodology and technique for the pursuit of Islamic spirituality (i.e., Sufism or *Tasawwuf*) and it was for this reason that he did not appoint a *Khalifah* from amongst his students and disciples. I felt that I had something to offer in response to Iqbal. I was convinced that there was another route to Islamic spirituality which would deliver *Nūr* from Allah and which did not require *Baiyyah* with a Sufi *Shaikh*. My view was that a tree should be judged by the fruit it delivered, and if the new methodology and technique delivered fruit in the form of spiritually-illuminated Islamic scholars who could successfully penetrate the *reality* of the modern age then such would validate that new methodology and technique.

I located the alternate route to *Nūr* in a *Hadīth* that was universally accepted all through the history of the *Ummah*. Prophet Muhammad (*sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam*) had advised his followers to recite *Sūrah al-Kahf* on the day of *Jumu'ah* and he declared that they would, as a consequence, receive *Nūr* from the heavens to the earth, and that such *Nūr* would stay with them until the next day of *Jumu'ah*.

I was informed that *Masjid Azzāwiyah* in Cape Town was offended by my view that there could be another path to the acquisition of *Nūr* other than the tried and tested traditional Sufi way of *Baiyyah* with a Sufi *Shaikh* and

through the *Silsila*. And it was perhaps for this reason that they called to announce, recklessly so, that they had cancelled my lecture that was scheduled to be delivered at that *Masjid*. My Reception Committee scrambled to find another venue and succeeded in rescheduling the lecture to another nearby *Masjid*. But that *Masjid* was somewhat small and there were many who had to be contented with standing-room only for the lecture that night.

A DAY OF TEST CRICKET

The reception committee had set aside time to be spent on a trip to Robben Island, and to take a cable car up to the top of Table Mountain, but I cancelled them all. But cricket was different. The West Indian cricket team was in South Africa for a test series, and had already won the first test in Pt Elizabeth prior to their arrival in Cape Town. That victory had come after the proverbial seven years of drought and there was now some expectancy that West Indian cricket would resurrect.

I had not gone to see a day of test cricket for perhaps 20 years, the closest being a futile effort I had made in Melbourne, Australia, on Boxing Day 2001 when England was playing Australia. I decided to take a break the next day from my Cape Town lecture-tour to enjoy some cricket, and the members of my reception committee were in full support of my decision. The test match was being played at Cape Town's picturesque Sahara Newlands cricket ground which was located at the foothills of the famed Table Mountains. Rafeeq, who was a member of my reception committee, accompanied me for my day of relaxation. We bought cricket hats that brought us quite some relief when we sat down on seats in an uncovered stand and with the sun blazing down on us. There were many whites who appeared to have come to the cricket in order to get a tan, and so we were exposed to lots of bare skin around us. The Prophet (*sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam*) had prophesied that “*people*

would have sexual intercourse in public like donkeys” and it was quite plain that the fulfillment of that ominous prophecy was around the corner.

It was the last day of the test, and Sarwan in particular had batted with great patience, determination and skill to make it possible for the West Indies to either win the match or force a draw. Chris Gayle was injured and had to bat with a runner. All that he had to do was to secure his end while letting Sarwan pile up the runs at the other end. Instead Gayle batted senselessly and was soon out caught to a lofted pull. With Gayle gone the match was essentially lost, and we did not bother to remain until the end of the day’s play.

But we also left early because of an engagement that was scheduled for that evening.

LAUNCH OF ‘SŪRAH AL-KAHF AND THE MODERN AGE’ IN CAPE TOWN

The launch of my new book in Cape Town was scheduled for Saturday January 5th 2008. When I was leaving KL to fly to Cape Town I was doubtful whether the shipment of books I had sent by sea would reach in time for the launch. My solution to the problem was to take with me on the aircraft a number of boxes of that book. Had I not done that we would have had to postpone the launch of ‘*Sūrah al-Kahf and the Modern Age*’ in Cape Town since the shipment of books did not reach until a few days after the launch.

Mahdi Kriel was invited to deliver the feature address at the launch which took place at *Masjid al-Furqān*. All copies of the book that were brought by air were sold out on the day of the launch. When another 200 copies reached Cape Town from the shipment that had eventually arrived from Kuala Lumpur by sea, those also were quickly sold out. I then ordered that the remaining 100

copies of my shipment for South Africa be also sent to Cape Town and, with great difficulty, I was able to save about 30 copies from those 100 for the launch of the book in Durban. Indeed, by the time I left Cape Town at the end of January we had a waiting list of people who had ordered the book. What this indicated was that in '*Sūrah al-Kahf and the Modern Age*' I had been blessed with another potential 'best-selling' book. The first, of course, was '*Jerusalem in the Qur'ān*'. Praise is due to Allah Most High. *La ilaha illa hu!*

MAULANA SIDDIQUI'S DEATH ANNIVERSARY

Ā custom had arisen over time in Muslim spiritual culture to commemorate the death anniversaries of eminent spiritual luminaries. We now lived in an age master-minded by the one-eyed hence spiritually-blind *Dajjāl*. It was an age whose basic characteristic was a sustained war that was launched on all that related to the spiritual. To the extent that such an entirely voluntary practice of commemoration of a death anniversary reconnected people to a past that was spiritually illumined, it had to be recognized as good and beneficial. The Qur'an itself had reassured believers that any good act, regardless of how small it was, would be rewarded.

Maulānā Abdul Aleem Siddiqui had passed away to Allah's mercy in the blessed city of Madina in 1953. And on Sunday January 6th 2008 in Cape Town a large number of members of the *Aleemiyah-Ansari* spiritual assembly gathered at Ghulam's home to pray for mercy on his soul. They invited me to address them on the occasion and I chose to speak on the passage in the *Qur'ān* (in *Sūrah al-Kahf*) which recorded the encounter of Mūsa ('*alaihi al-Salām*') with Khidr ('*alaihi al-Salām*'). I regarded this to be the most important passage in the whole *Qur'ān* directing attention to the strategic importance of Islamic spirituality.

TWO ALL-DAY SEMINARS

My lecture-tour of Cape Town was very intelligently organized to include two all-day seminars. The first was on '*Sūrah al-Kahf and the Modern Age*' and the second was on '*Islām and Money*'. The attendance in both seminars was restricted to 100 participants and that allowed for a more penetrating study of the two subjects. Both all-day seminars took place in the auditorium of the International Peace University that was located on the same compound with *Masjid Habībiah*, and both attracted a satisfactory attendance - male as well as female. We invited participants to submit a brief assessment of each seminar and the responses were almost always positive. They even enjoyed the highly spiced *akhani* that had me burping all through the afternoon session of the first seminar. That problem was solved in the second seminar when deference was paid to my Chinese stomach.

TWO PUBLIC DIALOGUES

Finally, my team of young men brilliantly planned two public dialogues, the first being a Christian-Muslim Dialogue on '*Signs of the Last Day in the Modern Age*' and the second on '*The Role of Religion in Politics*'. Both public dialogues were held in an auditorium in the Middle Campus of the picturesque University of Cape Town. The first dialogue will enter into the history books as a tremendous public relations success. *Alhamdu lillah!* Readers can view the video recording of that Dialogue on my website www.imranhosein.org

I was acutely conscious of the fact that Cape Town had a very large and very influential Jewish community who were intimately and strategically linked to the State of Israel. And so when I was informed that an approach had been made for a Jewish Rabbi to join the Christian Bishop and myself in the Dialogue I quickly insisted that I would permit only such a Jewish scholar to

participate in the Dialogue who was not, himself, a supporter of the State of Israel. When my team began to question the Rabbi on his views with respect to Israel he quickly withdrew from participation in the Dialogue. In addition we received an angry letter from Mr Glass of the Jewish Board of Deputies criticizing us for politicizing the Dialogue but informing us that he intended to personally attend. If that news was meant to intimidate me, it did not have such an effect.

I wanted the Dialogue to be a public relations success in order to defeat the evil designs of those who were waging wicked war on *Islām* on behalf of the State of Israel. Bishop Quinlin visited me at Ghulam's home a few days prior to the Dialogue and we quickly built a positive bond between us.

We began the Dialogue itself on a very positive note with an absolutely packed auditorium and large numbers of white South Africans in attendance. I could only assume that many of them were Jews. Mr Glass attended, as promised, and I was introduced to him prior to the commencement of the Dialogue. He chose a front row seat in the auditorium directly in front of the two speakers. I could not fail to see him.

I was the first speaker and I made certain to establish a friendly and respectful tone of the Dialogue. I even injected some humor for a cricket-crazy South African audience while commenting "*I saw Freddie Truman bowl, and I saw Len Hutton bat. And Bishop Quinlin just told me that he saw Don Bradman bat. So we have been here for quite some time.*" The audience loved it.

I took pains to ensure that the Dialogue was conducted in a very courteous way, with no rivalry between the two religious viewpoints. I wanted mutual respect for each other's religion without either speaker compromising

on his own position. Bishop Quinlin reciprocated marvelously and we succeeded in maintaining the Dialogue in precisely that way.

I was most surprised, however, to learn that the Bishop did not believe in a physical return of Jesus (*‘alaihi al-Salām*). This appeared to be a peculiarly Euro-Christian view, and it certainly differed from the traditional Christian belief upheld all through 2000 years of history. He also argued against a gloomy apocalyptic view of the end of history. Instead he felt that we should emphasize positive things. In other words he was refashioning the end of history in accordance with his own view of how it should end. From our perspective, apart from our surprise at the Bishop’s views, the most important thing that was achieved in the Dialogue was the large audience getting a chance to listen to the prophesies of Prophet Muhammad (*sallallahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*) concerning the Signs of the Last Day. Even more important was the fact that they were introduced to the subject in a public Dialogue in which they felt no discomfort.

Mr Glass approached the moderator at the end of the Dialogue to bitterly complain about Jewish non-participation. He lamented a great opportunity that was lost. Our people naturally reminded him that we had invited a Jewish representative to participate in order to articulate a Jewish viewpoint on the subject of the Dialogue, but he had declined the invitation.

Bishop Quinlin had delivered a stinging criticism of Israel’s conduct in relation to the Palestinians, and had even defended the Palestinian right to a state of their own. Those remarks had appeared to rattle the Jewish Head of the Board of Deputies, but I chose to let the subject pass without a comment. I knew full well that it would be advantageous to Israel to seduce the Palestinians, as so many other Muslims had been seduced, with yet another secular client-state of the Judeo-Christian alliance such as Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

DIALOGUE ON THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN POLITICS

The second public Dialogue on *'The Role of Religion in Politics'* was scheduled to take place at the Bo Kaap museum in historic old Cape Town with Mr Zwelethu Jolobe, an African political scientist attached to the University of Cape Town joining with me as a speaker. The organizing team was afraid that the museum might not be large enough to accommodate the audience in the event that this second public Dialogue were to be as well attended as the first. And they hastily switched the venue to the beautiful campus of the University of Cape Town located on a commanding height overlooking the city.

I visited Mr Jolobe at his office in the university campus a few days prior to the Dialogue and we found to our pleasant surprise that we were both attracted to Aimé Cesaire and Franz Fanon. I felt confident that we would strike a positive note at the Dialogue. After leaving Jolobe's office I was taken on a trip up to the Rhode's Memorial which was built on the same mountain as the University and which overlooked the city of Cape Town. I knew the something of the history of his exploits in Southern Africa and I wondered how long a memorial to such a slave-master would survive now that the slaves had control over government.

The second dialogue did not attract the large white audience that the first one did, and we should have had the sense to anticipate such a response, In addition, it did not attract the large Muslim audience that the first one did, and that also could have been anticipated.

I began the Dialogue by pointing to the differing roles of religion in the epic encounter between Pharaoh and Moses (*'alaihi al-Salām*). Egyptian religion had supported the system of dominance and oppression which enslaved people in Egypt. On the other hand, religion as preached and practiced by Moses

resisted that oppression and struggled for liberation from oppression. It was therefore clear that there was a difference between ‘true’ religion and ‘false’ religion, and one of the essential roles of ‘true’ religion in politics was to resist the oppressor and participate in the struggle to liberate the oppressed.

Allah Most wise had declared in the *Qur’ān* that he preserved Pharoah’s body so that it might function as a Sign for a people to come at a later age. Now that Pharoah’s body had been discovered the implication was that mankind would experience a reenactment of that epic encounter between the oppressor and the oppressed, and between ‘true’ religion and ‘false’ religion. This was the *reality* of the modern age. Thus the defining characteristic of ‘true’ religion in the modern age was its insistence in resisting and denouncing the oppressor, and in struggling for liberation from oppression. And it was precisely for this reason that I had been attacked in Trinidad and banned for lecturing in *Masājid* and Islamic schools under the control of a miserable pro-American so-called Islamic organization.

Pharoah’s body had been preserved by divine decree as a Sign for those who lived the way Pharoah lived (i.e., supporting the oppressor while holding on to false religion and attacking those who preached true religion) that they would die the way he died. At the moment of death they would realize, as Pharoah realized, that they were wrong in belief and evil in conduct, and would then accept the truth. But it would then be too late, and they would die with the knowledge that they belonged to the hell-fire.

I directed attention in the Dialogue to the immediate oppression that stared me in the face everywhere I went in South Africa. Every home I visited had black South African women employed as domestic servants. Some would have two, three, or even four maids. In addition some had an African gardener, or driver, etc. I argued that if they were paid wages that no man or woman in

their employer's community would work for, then such would be 'slave wages' – and 'slave wages' were evidence of oppression.

I had prepared myself for the Dialogue by paying a visit to Beauty's home. 'Beauty' was an African woman employed in the home of a member of the Reception Committee. She came a few times to clean the house in which I was staying. I made her a lovely salad which she not only ate, but delighted in eating. She was paid a better wage than most others, but was still poor. Her husband had died and she lived in a shack in a squatter colony with her son and daughter. I persuaded her to allow me to visit her home. "*But it is just a shack*" she pleaded. It was indeed just a shack. I stepped inside and saw for myself the miserable condition in which she and her children lived. I also got her to escort me on a walk around the squatter colony to see how the others lived.

South Africa was a country with fabulous wealth in gold and diamonds, and yet the black African people lived in such miserable poverty while white South Africa remained permanently rich and was growing richer. I asked those present in the Dialogue, "*where have all the diamonds gone?*"

Jolobe did an excellent job in describing the entirely differing responses of religion in the struggle against *Apartheid*. Euro-Christianity and Euro-Judaism had largely supported the oppressor white *Apartheid* regime while Afro-Christianity largely opposed it and struggled against it while supporting the African National Congress (ANC). In Israel as well, Euro-Christianity and Euro-Judaism was largely supporting the oppressor State of Israel while the most significant opposition to Israel was coming from those who were inspired by *Islām*.

THE CRASH

*M*ogamat was taking us in his car to the *Masjid*. It was the day of *Jumu'ah* and I had to deliver the *Jumu'ah* talk. I was sitting in the front seat of the compact hatchback and had my seatbelt fastened, while Hasbullah was in the backseat. Someone two cars ahead of us stopped his car while waiting to turn into a street on the right side. We were thus in a stationary position when suddenly a car crashed into us from the rear. I was pitched forward, and the impact of the blow caused me to experience significant whiplash. The other two also suffered significant shock and whiplash but apart from that no one was injured. *Alhamdu lillah*. I got out of the car in a daze and held on for a while as I struggled to recover from the serious blow.

The driver of the offending vehicle was a young Arab, dressed in his *Jubba* and cap, who was on his way to attend the *Salāt al-Jumu'ah* and appeared to have been in too great a hurry to get there. He was clearly in the wrong, but kept on appealing to us while pointing to the fact that his car appeared to have suffered greater damage and that “*Ana Muslim*” (i.e., I am a Muslim).

Eventually I did arrive at the *Masjid* – just a few minutes late – and gave my talk with no one the wiser of what had just happened.

TWO DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

*M*aulānā Ehsaan Hendricks visited Kuala Lumpur on his way to attend a conference in Jakarta sometime in August or September. He called me on the phone and we chatted for a while, but unfortunately we could not meet during his brief visit to Kuala Lumpur. He now came to the home where I was staying in Cape Town to personally greet me and welcome me to his city. I made mention of him earlier in this travelogue as the President of the Muslim Judicial Council (MJC) of Cape Town. One of the distinguishing

characteristics of his service to the mission of *Islām* was his staunch devotion to, and fearless advocacy of the cause of those in the Holy Land who are victims of Israel's relentless and barbarous oppression.

Shaikh Abdul Hakeem Quick was based in Toronto while I was based in New York, and our paths crossed on several occasions. He was a scholar and academic and I invariably learnt something new from him whenever we met. He had taken the very intelligent decision to change his residence from Toronto to Cape Town, and as a consequence it was now possible for me to meet with him whenever I visited Cape Town.

I paid a call on him in his office during my visit to Cape Town in March 2007 on my way to Malaysia. And now, one year later, it was he who came to visit me at the home where I was staying. Since he was widely traveled in Africa, I took the opportunity presented by his visit to learn from him what was happening around Africa. I had a passionate interest in Africa and I hoped to be able to make a lecture-tour around the continent at some time *Insha Allah*.

HARUN YAHYA AND COMPANY UNLIMITED

It has never been my style to call peoples' names in public while making critical comments. But I finally decided upon an exception to that norm in the case of one unseen individual who I suspected to be more than a hundred individuals.

I had spent the last few years carefully observing the growth of a curious Islamic literary phenomenon that concealed itself behind the pen-name of Harun Yahya. I did not believe that a single Islamic scholar could have had either the unlimited intellectual resources or the even more unlimited financial resources to produce the Harun Yahya literary phenomenon that had emerged

so spectacularly within the span of just a few years. Nor could I discern any proper reason for the resort to a pen-name other than to conceal something that could not be revealed.

I suspected that there was a concealed agenda at work, and sure enough books eventually emerged which sought to mislead Muslims in their understanding in as critically important subject as the end of history. It is beyond the scope of this travelogue for me to comment further on the subject, but I did begin to speak out on the subject and to warn Muslims for the first time in my public lectures in Cape Town. There are those whom Allah Most Kind has blessed with *Nūr* who would eventually be able to discern the agenda I referred to, and then there are others

TRIP TO PAARL

The town of Paarl was located about one hour's drive from Cape Town, and we drove there on the last Friday morning of my lecture-tour of Cape Town. I gave the talk at the *Masjid* at the time of *Salāt al-Jumu'ah* and was then invited for a community lunch at the home of a Capetonian who had migrated to Paarl some 40 years earlier. And what a lunch it turned out to be – with some of the most luscious fruits one could ever taste. Paarl was a wine-growing area with lots of mountains, valleys and picturesque vineyards. It was hotter than Cape Town in the summer and colder in the winter. Some of my hosts in Paarl had a surprise for me. They had traveled to the Caribbean to attend the cricket world-cup in which West Indies was convincingly beaten. I marveled at their knowledge of the history of cricket – who played against who? and when did they play? – what was the result of the game? - what were the scores?, etc. I said to myself, “if they knew the *Qur'ān* as well as they knew cricket, they would be scholars of *Islām*”!

FOUR SESSIONS WITH WOMEN

The blessed Prophet (*sallallahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*) used to set aside one day of the week to be spend exclusively with women for the purpose of answering their questions and instructing them in the religion. The reception committee very sensibly organized four lecture-sessions at the *Masjid al-Quds* auditorium on four consecutive mornings with attendance reserved for women only.

Among the subjects addressed in those lectures were: ‘*An Islamic Response to the Modern Feminist Revolution*’ and ‘*The Women of Islām in the House of Allah*’. This second topic came as an absolute surprise to the women. None of those present had ever heard of the blessed Prophet’s command that when women perform *Salāt* they must remain in the position of *Sijdah* (prostration) longer than men. The reason for this command, as explained by the Prophet himself, was that some of the men might not have enough cloth to cover their private parts, and if a woman were to raise her head from prostration (in prayer) too soon, she might behold a most inappropriate sight. The blessed Prophet (*sallallahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*) also declared that “*the best row for the men is the first and the worst is the last, and the best row for the women is the last and the worst is the first*”.

The *Sunnah* was thus quite clear that men and women prayed in the same space in the *Masjid* with women praying behind the men and with no barrier blocking their view of the men in front of them. Despite these very plain commands, Muslims today have experienced an almost universal denial of such rights of women in the House of Allah. I warned of a tomorrow that would come in which misguided Muslim feminists (i.e., women of *Dajjāl* such as the profoundly misguided Amina Wadūd), would establish *Masājid* for women in which a woman would give the *Khutbah* (sermon) from the *Mimbar* (pulpit) on the day of *Jumu’ah* and a woman would lead the *Salāt* (prayer).

KHAYELITSHA AND GUGULETHU

My reception committee organized a workshop on the project of the Muslim Village as one of the most important sessions of the lecture tour. They wisely decided to hold it at *Masjid Bilāl* in the African Township of *Khayelitsha*. The *Imām* translated the proceedings from English to the African *Xhosa* language for the benefit of the many local African Muslims, men as well as women, who attended. As was typical of Africans, and strangely absent in Indian Muslim gatherings in a *Masjid*, there were babies and children present, and they lent a wonderful family atmosphere to the event.

The workshop grappled bravely with the project and I had to answer many questions from an audience that was fascinated with the idea of building a Muslim Village. African people love village life. I recalled how the local Musharraf in my native Trinidad had launched a public attack on the project when I first spoke on the subject in 2004. He had argued, falsely so, that Muslims had a religious obligation to remain a part of mainstream society, and that the project of a Muslim Village violated that Islamic religious obligation. He probably learnt his *Islām* from CNN.

I expected the South African government to be sympathetic to such a project, particularly since one of the major objectives was to create and sustain a racial and tribal fraternity. The workshop ended with a firm resolve to strive to at least commence the establishment of the project before my next visit to Cape Town.

My very last lecture on the topic of '*Imām al-Mahdi and the Return of the Islamic Caliphate*' was held in the African Township of Gugulethu. At the end of the lecture the African representative of the Gugulethu Muslims addressed the gathering to express his *Jama'ah's* gratitude for what we had done. They were happy that African Gugulethu had been included as a part of our program

of lectures from the very beginning, and not as an after-thought. This was a happy departure from the neglect that they had continuously experienced over the years as scholars of *Islām* visited Cape Town.

PORT ELIZABETH - SOUTH AFRICA

I flew from Cape Town to Pt Elizabeth at the end of January 2008 for three public lectures and a *Jumu'ah* talk. I had visited Pt Elizabeth several times in the past and was known in that city. My host in PE informed me that a request to a local *Mufti* for permission for one of my lectures to be delivered in a local *Masjid* had been rejected on the grounds that I was not a graduate of a *Dār al-'Ulūm*. In other words the Aleemiyah Institute of Islamic Studies was not considered to be a *Dār al-'Ulūm*, and *Maulānā* Dr Fadlur Rahman Ansari was not recognized as an *Ālim*. Time and again, as I traveled for one long year to so many lands and interacted with so many peoples, I was convinced that the biggest problem facing the world of *Islām* today was a problem located within the ranks of the '*Ulamā* or scholars of *Islām*. There were many who were inadequately educated and sometimes profoundly misguided, and they used their control over their blind followers to obstruct knowledge reaching those who needed it the most. The leaders of *Tableegh Jamaat* who, when they took control of *Masājid*, prevented people like myself from teaching and preaching in such *Masājid*, headed the list of such people.

My *Jumu'ah* talk was delivered at a *Masjid* that I instantly recognized. It was the same *Masjid* in which I had delivered a lecture on the occasion of my first visit to Pt Elizabeth (and South Africa) in October 1987 while I was still the Principal of the Aleemiyah Institute of Islamic Studies in Pakistan. Twenty tumultuous years had passed since then, and I had returned to South Africa and to Pt Elizabeth several times, in addition to which '*Jerusalem in the Qur'ān*' as well as all my other books had been on sale in PE, and yet the local

Mufti did not consider me qualified to speak on *Islām* in the *Masājīd* that were under his control. Was it because of fear of loss of sheep, or loss of *Kursī* (position and status) that this *Mufti*, in addition to all the *Masājīd* under the control of the Indian *Tableegh Jamaat* and the Saudi-trained *Salafīs*, had closed their doors on me? Was this also the reason why *Dajjāl's* faithful disciple in my own Trinidad had banned me from teaching *Islām*?

Over the years I had found Muslims from Somalia, like Muslims from Sudan, Kashmir, Aceh in Indonesia, etc., to have a sincere attachment to *Islām*, and it was not surprising that two of my public lectures in PE were delivered in *Masājīd* that had a dominant African Somali Muslim presence.

EAST LONDON - SOUTH AFRICA

On Saturday morning I traveled by Greyhound coach from PE to East London, and what a 5-hour drive it was. When I traveled in South Africa by air I felt the discomfort of being in the presence of those who, until recently, had been barbarous oppressors of the African people. I was acutely conscious of the fact that these people were part of Europe's Jewish-Christian alliance that was waging unjust war on *Islām* and Muslims. But when I traveled in this country by coach I was reassured that I was in beautiful Africa since almost all the passengers were black, and Africans were friendly to *Islām* and Muslims. One has to travel by double-decker coach while sitting in the upper deck to relish the haunting beauty of Southern Africa.

In previous visits to East London I had lectured in the main *Masjid* of the city and the lectures had always attracted a big audience. This time, however, my lecture in East London was arranged in a new *Masjid* established by Indian Muslims, and as a consequence of internal rivalries in East London, as well as other reasons, the lecture attracted a grand total of about two dozen people. I

had traveled for five hours to get to East London, but I restrained myself from giving way to frustration with the hope that perhaps the heart of even one person in the small gathering might be touched and, as a consequence, a life might be changed. Allah Most High had honored me in allowing me to travel so extensively to preach the beautiful religion of *Islām*, and He was now testing this weary traveler, and I did not want to fail the test because of frustration.

I had a ticket to return to PE the next day by coach with departure at 1 pm and arrival in PE at about 6.30 pm. And yet, I had to deliver my farewell lecture in that city at close to 7 pm. How would I be able to deliver a lecture immediately after arriving from a 5-hour long journey by coach? I pitied myself. But Abdul Qahhar Hendricks intervened to build for himself a considerable bank account in the next world. He drove his wife's Mercedes at great speed all the way from PE to East London to pick me up, and then drove all the way back to PE arriving there with time enough left for me to take a little sleep before my lecture that night. Many people had been kind to me as I traveled for one long year. They had done so many things to make life easier for me, but no one had intervened to relieve me from such distress as did Abdul Qahhar Hendricks. May Allah Most High bless him and build for him a home in *Jannah!* *Amīn!*

My farewell lecture that Sunday night in PE attracted a full house in the large community hall. I spoke on the subject '*Signs of the Last Day in the Modern Age*'. I naturally had to quote the *Hadīth* in which Prophet Muhammad (*sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam*) had prophesied that “*women would dress like men*” and that “*men would dress like women*”. In the process of drawing attention to the fact that women were already dressing like men, and that such a phenomenon was directly linked to *Dajjāl*, it seems that I succeeded in offending at least some of the large number of women who attended the

lecture. I also pointed out to the dismay of large numbers on clean-shaven men who attended the lecture that modern western civilization's clean-shaven faces were meant to prepare the way for *men to dress like women*.

Pt Elizabeth boasted of some of the largest automobile manufacturing plants in the whole of Africa. We drove past the Volkswagen automobile plant in Uitenhage, an industrial town some 35 km from Port Elizabeth in the Eastern Cape.

But more importantly I met two African Islamic scholars while in PE. One of them complained bitterly of the racist behavior of an unnamed Indian Islamic scholar who made very disparaging remarks about the African people. I was delighted to meet the African Islamic scholars and I dearly wished I could have had them with me during my month-long lecture-tour of Cape Town that had just ended. If it could ever be possible I would be absolutely delighted to welcome them to the Caribbean where, I felt sure, they could make a positive impact on both African and Indian Muslims.

DURBAN FOR THE SECOND TIME THEN TOWN OF PIETERMARITZBURG

I flew to Durban on a Monday morning February 4th 2008 and by mid-afternoon that very day I was on my way by car to the town of Pietermaritzburg. I had visited this town several times in the past and I was well aware of the bitter sectarian divide in the Muslim community. My teacher, *Maulānā* Dr Ansari had scrupulously avoided participation in sectarian strife and this was also my way. While I participated in such religious practices as the *Moulid al-Nabi* and the fortieth day (after death) prayers, I never debated such issues, nor did I ever allow acceptance or non-acceptance of such religious practices to separate me from other Muslims. But

since my lecture in Pietermaritzburg on the crucially important subject of ‘*Sūrah al-Kahf and the Modern Age*’ was organized by one side of the divide, the other side boycotted it.

My host in Pietermaritzburg, Irshād Sufi, had great love and respect for me, and I was very happy indeed to meet with him. He was a direct descendent of the great Sufi Sāheb who had established so many *Masājīd* in Southern Africa while traveling from one place to another by horse and carriage. Irshād was *Imām* at the *Masjid* in Pietermaritzburg that his own grandfather had established.

Irshād had a great love for *Maulānā* Dr Ansari and had devoted himself to the laborious task of transcribing and editing many of the tape-recorded lectures of *Maulānā* delivered during his visits to South Africa in 1970 and 72. He had also begun to do the same to recordings of my lectures and he surprised me by informing me that he had transcribed and edited my own lecture delivered in Cape Town one month earlier at the commemorative function held on the occasion of *Maulānā* ‘Abdul ‘Aleem Siddiqui’s death anniversary.

For the first time ever in Durban I did not stay at Musa Parak’s home. He had a full house of family members who had arrived from abroad and so, on my return from Pietermaritzburg, he arranged for me to stay at his son-in-law’s home instead. And that was how I got to know Ahmad Saeed Moola whom I had met only casually on previous visits. Ahmad accompanied me to the Ansar Muslim radio station where I was to be interviewed. When we got there the radio station insisted that Ahmad should conduct the interview. He could not get out of the situation and ended up interviewing me. He showed intense love for *Islām* and amazing sincerity in that attachment. The longer I spent in his company the more I admired him.

We had the launch in Durban of my book '*Sūrah al-Kahf and the Modern Age*'. I delivered a lecture on that subject on the occasion of the launch at the Sparks Road *Masjid* where the late *Maulānā* Dr Abbas Qasim was *Imām*. On my previous visit to Durban, mentioned elsewhere in this travelogue, I had visited his grave and prayed for mercy on his soul.

The twenty copies of the book that were left with us were totally inadequate to satisfy the demand. And so we had to record names in a waiting list. Two dear colleagues of mine who studied with me at Aleemiyah attended the lecture. They were Dr Abul Fadl Mohsin Ebrahim and *Maulānā* Muhammad Ali Khan.

Ibrahim Bufelo was the articulate chairman for another lecture in Durban on '*Israel vs Iran – the Dynamics of Politics in the Middle East in the context of the Struggle for Liberation in Palestine*'. Ibrahim, who is African, is the Secretary-General of the Muslim Youth Movement of South Africa which hosted my visit to Durban. He studied political science and was a good student of that subject. We had met several times in the past, but this time he was frank in declaring that he did not support my Muslim Village project. I responded that I had no problem with anyone not accepting the project. What I could not tolerate was a Muslim who dared to oppose the project and sought to sabotage it. *Dajjāl's* disciple in Trinidad had done precisely that. He had foolishly gone on radio and television and had given newspaper interviews in which he actively opposed the project and sought to sabotage it by making it look sinister. He argued, falsely so, that Muslims had a religious obligation to remain a part of mainstream society. He seemed to have less than a passing acquaintance with the *Qur'ān* and with many statements of the beloved Prophet (*sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam*).

HAJI RALPH KHAN DIES

I used to keep in touch with news from home through reading a local newspaper on the internet. It was Thursday February 7th when I learnt from the ‘Trinidad Guardian’ newspaper that former Senator, Haji Ralph Khan, had died in Trinidad. Although he was 79 and had led a full and active life during which he had achieved so much, I still felt his death as a significant personal loss since he had always been supportive of my work. On several occasions he publicly acknowledged *“the courage”* with which I pursued the mission of *Islām*. Indeed, when I was attacked, as described earlier in this travelogue, his was the most powerful voice of all raised in my defense. In a ‘Letter to the Editor’ published in a leading daily newspaper, he denounced as *“a demagogue”* the leader of the Islamic organization which had attacked me. That courageous letter was written because *“I regard this as a God-given responsibility and a duty which is incumbent upon me”*. It has entered into the historical records of the Muslim community of Trinidad and Tobago. This was the kind of example that ought to be preserved in history so that later generations would be inspired to respond with courage and integrity when attacks were launched such as the one to which I was subjected. While others who knew me, and who knew that the charges made against me were false and malicious, and that the ban placed on me was very sinful indeed, had chosen to remain silent, this brave and courageous man had stood up and raised his voice to denounce that which he could recognize as ‘sinful’ and ‘evil’ (when judged by the Islamic moral code).

I raised my hands in far-away Durban in South Africa in prayer for him, and prayed that Allah Most Kind might forgive him his sins and have mercy on his soul. I hope and pray that all those who read this travelogue for generations to come would kindly do the same. *Āmīn!*

ESCORT - SOUTH AFRICA

J delivered the talk for *Jumu'ah* for yet another time at the grand Grey Street *Masjid* of Durban and after *Jumu'ah* I left by car for the town of Escort. My trip to Escort was memorable. My driver was an Indian Muslim with an African wife. When he learnt that my French-Creole wife had an African father, his floodgates opened and he could not stop telling me of how Indians discriminated against Africans. My driver complained that Indian Muslims had difficulty in accepting his African wife. He then revealed his intimate links with South Africa's *Tableegh Jamaat*. He declared that "*they would travel long distances to far-off lands to preach Islām, and would take African Muslims with them, but the Africans would have to cook their food separately and eat their meals separately from the Indians. Indians would have secret marital or extra-marital relationships with African women, and when children were born of such relationships they would be spirited away to a Madrassah where they would spend years memorizing the Qur'ān while shielded from embarrassing public attention.*" These were serious charges coming from a member of the *Tableegh Jamaat*.

He even challenged me to check on the validity of his charges by speaking with an African Muslim who was walking close by as we approached our destination in Escort.

There was a young African woman who sat silently in the back seat of the car with her baby all the way from Durban to Escort. I later learnt that her husband was Pakistani. She must have been pained by the conversation, but I had no way of reading her African heart.

I lectured that night at the town's *Masjid* before a small gathering and then, next morning, I addressed the 300 African Muslim girls who were studying in the Muslim school. They loved the stories which I told, and they loved their teacher, the *Shaikh* from Mozambique who sat beside me. When I said that I would like to take him back with me to Trinidad they erupted in a

loud chorus of Noooooh! But why, I wondered, would Indian Muslims establish the school and maintain it with their generous donations, and then restrict enrollment to African girls while excluding Indian girls? I learnt the answer later, that it would be too expensive to do so. Indian girls would not eat food that was prepared for Africans, nor would they eat with Africans. In addition, African food was cheaper than Indian food.

It is certain that the comments recorded above will cause some pain to members of *Tableegh Jamaat*. Instead of making haste to condemn me for recording those comments in this travelogue, it would be advisable for them to address what appears to be a problem of racial discrimination.

LADYSMITH - SOUTH AFRICA

We left later that morning for an enchanting drive to the town of Ladysmith where *Maulānā* Abdul Aleem Akleker was based.

The South African countryside is hauntingly beautiful and I was moved to total silence as we drove to Ladysmith. It was also my birthday. I had reached 66 years of age with so much for which to thank Allah Most High.

‘Abdul ‘Aleem had studied at Aleemiyah with me, and although he was much junior to me he was very dear indeed to me. His sincere devotion to the mission of *Islām* in Ladysmith over more than 25 years of uninterrupted service to the community as *Imām* of the Sufi *Masjid* and Director in charge of the *Madrasah* inspired awe. There was no comparison between his achievement while serving the mission of *Islām*, and my own humble service. His achievement far surpassed mine, and I was truly proud of my younger brother.

I lectured that night in the *Masjid* on ‘*Sūrah al-Kahf and the Modern Age*’ and we were surprised at the large gathering which attended the lecture.

It was a surprise because the lecture clashed with another program at the nearby Islamic school.

We drove back to Durban the next day and I enjoyed a rare day of rest. Ahmad Saeed took me for a walk along the beautiful Durban beachfront. There was great similarity with the beachfront in South Florida where I had lived for almost two years. It was also quite surprising for me to see so many Muslim families on the beachfront with Muslim women gaily dressed in multi-colored *Hijāb*.

I also paid a visit to *Maulānā* Jamaluddin who was confined to a bed in a Muslim home for the aged in Durban. He was a Canadian Roman Catholic Priest who had been sent to South Africa to respond to the attacks on Christianity launched by the late Ahmad Deedat. Instead, he himself became a Muslim, and then went on to study *Islām* at *Dār al-‘Ulūm* Newcastle under the venerable *Maulānā* Seema (*rahimahullah*). He eventually graduated from the *Dār al-‘Ulūm*. He had lost both his legs to illness despite which he remained as pleasant a person as you could ever encounter. *Islām* truly makes a Muslim noble.

He dearly wanted to read my book on ‘*Sūrah al-Kahf and the Modern Age*’. I had visited him and spoken to him about the book one year earlier during my brief visit to Durban, and he had waited all year long for it. There was indescribable joy on his face when I presented him with Ahmad Saeed’s copy, and with a promise that when the next shipment of copies arrived in South Africa he would get his own copy. As I write this travelogue here in Trinidad I just received news that the shipment had arrived in Durban and I hastened to ensure that *Maulānā* Jamaluddin got his own copy of the book.

Jamaluddin had a very special love for *Sūrah al-Kahf* of the *Qur'ān*, and it was that love which brought such *Nūr* (light) to his face as he opened my book and started to read from it.

BLACK TOWNSHIP OF SOWETO NEAR JOHANNESBURG

I flew back to Johannesburg from Durban on Monday February 11th almost one year after my last brief visit. Malik Arafat, the African *Amīr* of the Muslims of Soweto, greeted me at the airport and took me straight to a Soweto ‘Bed & Breakfast’ Motel located just a few hundred yards away from Nelson Mandela’s historic home. It was from that small and simple home located in Soweto that Mandela had participated in the epic struggle against European colonial rule over Southern Africa and against Dutch *Apartheid*.

I could spend only four days in Soweto although I had promised to spend a week. Despite that, the African Muslims of Soweto appreciated my gesture to actually live in Soweto amongst them for those four days. They complained that visiting Islamic scholars hardly ever visited Soweto, and those who did so would restrict themselves to a fleeting visit of just a few hours before beating a retreat from the volatile black township. I enjoyed my four days in Soweto. I felt as though I was back in Port of Spain in my native Trinidad and Tobago.

The Muslim community in Soweto was poor. Many of them did not have cars of their own. For my very first lecture I had to take a taxi to get to a small *Musalla* located behind a Gas Station. While I was sitting in the taxi a woman sitting behind me gently tapped my shoulder and handed me some money. Malik Arafat smiled at me as my eyes opened wide in surprise. But I quickly recovered, understood what I was supposed to do, took the money from her and passed it on to the driver.

Sowetans live in the African tradition of one extended family. I loved it, and I loved Africa. One week later I would deliver the *Jumu'ah* talk at a *Masjid* in Laudium in Pretoria and make an appeal for a grant of a vehicle for the Islamic mission in Soweto. My lecture in the *Musalla* attracted a small audience, but among those present were two young African men who had graduated from *Dār al-'Ulūm Zakariah* in Lanasia. I had met with *Maulānās* Abbas and Yahya during my previous visit to Soweto one year earlier, and it was a happy moment when we were reunited.

The next morning I went to the dining table for breakfast and found that there were two European women also staying as guests in the tiny three-bedroom B&B/Motel. We chatted over breakfast until their car arrived to take them away for the day. Later I would learn that one of the two European guests in the B&B was a Police Chief in the Dutch Police Service.

After they had left I kept on sitting with my ageing host and his wife as they recounted anecdotes from the struggle for liberation. My hostess narrated to me how Nelson Mandela used to come to their home to give important documents to her father for safe-keeping. This was necessary since the white police were constantly swooping down on his home in order to search it. My hostess went on to explain that since her husband was a retired police officer who had served the *Apartheid* regime there was suspicion that he might have been assisting the white police service. As a consequence there were difficult moments, particularly with Winnie Mandela. She did not like Winnie, and made no effort to conceal her dislike. I even learnt of the reason why Nelson divorced Winnie. Despite all the negative things I had to listen to concerning Winnie, I was nevertheless convinced that she had a better understanding of the devilish nature of European slavery than did Nelson, and that she could better understand our Muslim view that the greatest slavery of all was ahead of us.

After breakfast I walked over to the Nelson Mandela home (now a museum) and spent a long time inspecting and observing all that had been put on display. The house was very small with a small bedroom, small kitchen, etc. I could just imagine the terror that Winnie must have experienced while confined all alone in that house for so long and with police officers constantly entering the house. They must have subjected her to unimaginable abuse.

A lecture was arranged for the next day in the African town of Sobuking which was about an hour's drive from Soweto. The town was also known by its English name of Everton. I waited for hours for my car to arrive and then gave up and changed my clothes. Then I got a call that the lecture had to be cancelled since there was difficulty in getting transport to Sobuking. Then I got another call that a vehicle had been located and they were on their way to pick me up. Someone had bought a used ambulance in an auction sale and had not had the time to remove the ambulance sign painted on the vehicle, and that was the vehicle in which I made my uncomfortable way to Sobuking.

I got a surprise when I got to Sobuking. Indian Muslims had bought a large parcel of land and had foolishly built a tall wall around it to separate that compound completely from the surrounding African community. Within the compound they built their own little Indian village and even established their own cemetery for their dead. They were a business community who traded with the blacks but refused to live with them as a family. It was something unthinkable to marry a black woman, or to give a daughter in marriage to a black man. Eventually they paid the price for their folly. The African town rose in rebellion against this poison within their midst. The houses were destroyed and the Indian Muslims had to flee for their lives. It was this very compound that I was now visiting. The Indian Muslims eventually gave the property to African Muslims with the plea that they should preserve the cemetery.

Dinner was served before the lecture and to my delight I was offered a traditional African dish called *mealie meal*. The white of the corn grain was separated from the yellow, and that white part was then crushed into a powder. Water was added to the powder and the mixture was heated until it became a pap. That pap was served with a tomato dish that would sometimes have pieces of meat in it. This very simple meal was the staple African food. No wonder they were so healthy. Indeed the modern supermarket was destroying that healthy African diet.

The audience for my lecture in Sobuking was largely comprised of Africans who had come as economic refugees to South Africa from other impoverished parts of Africa. I lectured on ‘*The Gold Dīnār and Silver Dirham – Islām and the Future of Money*’ before an audience which also comprised many members of the *Murābitūn* Sufi movement. They were highly skilled in the subject of *Ribā* and the fraudulent nature of paper currency since the *Murābitūn* had long championed the cause of the return of the Gold *Dinār*.

At the end of the lecture I got yet another surprise. An African Muslim police officer had attended my lecture and he agreed to take me back to Soweto in his police car. What a day it had been; I was first taken in an ambulance and I was now in a South African police car!

On my third day in Soweto the Islamic Cable Channel ITV came to interview me. The B&B gave them permission to rearrange their sitting room for the interview. I identified ‘scholars of *Islām*’ as the biggest problem facing the Muslim world today, and I went on to argue that the problem had arisen because of the *Dār al-Ulūm*. I recalled that my teacher, *Maulānā* Dr Ansari, had identified the problem and had attempted to recreate and restructure the *Dār al-Ulūm* in a manner that would equip graduates to grapple successfully with the awesome challenges of the modern world. However his experiment with the Aleemiyah Institute of Islamic Studies in Pakistan collapsed after he

died, and those who succeeded him have continued to fail miserably in restoring his dream. That interview ruffled some of the ‘*Ulamā*.

A lecture was arranged for Soweto’s Muslim women and I met with them at Soweto’s *Masjid al-Ummah*. The *Imām* of the *Masjid*, *Imām* Ibrāhīm, belonged to the *Murābitūn* Sufi Movement, and he graciously welcomed me to his *Masjid*. In a gathering comprised almost exclusively of black women there was one white face that stood out. I later learnt that she was the *Imām*’s wife. Marriages between whites and blacks had been strictly prohibited under South Africa’s *Apartheid* rule. The *Imām* invited me to stay for lunch and, to my delight, it was the simple African lunch of *mealie meal*. That same night I lectured in the same *Masjid* on the subject ‘*An Islamic View of the Return of Jesus*’ (‘*alaihi al-Salām*). I found the *Murābitūn* to be inexplicably shielded from the subject of ‘*Signs of the Last Day*’ of which the return of Jesus was the very heart.

The next morning Malik Arafat took me to meet with his mother. It was a delightful meeting from which I learnt so much. The African way of life had so much wisdom in it. I learnt that her mother used to build a house with her own hands. The house was built with mud walls and had a thatched roof. It was warm in the winter and cool in the summer. The white *Apartheid* regime had wickedly prohibited the African people from building houses African style (i.e., the African hut). Instead they were forced to use concrete blocks with the result that their houses were hot in summer and cold in winter. I also learnt that every African family would plant food around their home and would keep chicken, sheep, goats, etc., in the yard. The food that was so produced gave to the African people a measure of freedom and independence. The wicked white *Apartheid* regime prohibited them from producing such food to the extent that helicopters would fly over their land spraying chemicals which killed crops

and animals. The objective was to reduce them to a state of such dependence that they would be forced to submit to the rule of those who possessed power.

As I listened to her I understood why money was constantly losing value all around the world today, with consequent constant rise in prices. Money-meltdown that was now taking place around the world with the pre-planned meltdown of the US dollar was designed to produce the same result. The evil plan was to reduce mankind (Muslims in particular) to a state of such total destitution and dependence as would force them to submit to the rule of the Euro-Jewish State of Israel. I then recalled the wise advice of Prophet Muhammad (*sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam*) who said: *“If you have land – hold on to your land; and if you have animals – hold on to your animals.”* And when a man asked: *“Oh messenger of Allah – what should we do if we have neither land nor animals?”* He said: *“sharpen your sword!”*

The blessed Prophet was here warning of a time that would come when food would be beyond the reach of the impoverished masses who would not be able to afford high prices. At that time only those of the poor who had lands and animals would survive. That the rest would have to *“sharpen their swords”* implied that the masses would have to resort to violent riots in order to get food.

As this travelogue is being written the meltdown has already provoked such rising prices around the world that riots for food are already taking place in Egypt, Haiti, Bangladesh and other places.

SHARPVILLE - SOUTH AFRICA

Malik Arafat was keen on ensuring that I was properly educated in the struggle against oppression in South Africa, and so he took me to visit historic Sharpsville where the massacre of 69 people had taken place in 1960 during the

struggle against *Apartheid*. That massacre was provoked by Robert Sobukwe's initiative against the white South African regime's Pass Laws.

I always had a great admiration for Robert Sobukwe, the founder of the Pan African Congress (a break-away from the African National Congress), who also inspired the Black Consciousness Movement. I found a parallel in him to my hero, Malcolm X, and I considered them both to have been greater thinkers and leaders than Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King. Louis Farrakhan, of course, had defiantly declared of Malcolm X, "*he was a traitor to his people and we dealt with him the way we deal with traitors*".

On 21st March 1960, the PAC led a nationwide protest against the hated Pass Law which required black people to carry a pass book at all times. Sobukwe led a march to the local police station in Orlando, Soweto, (where my B&B was located) in order to openly defy the laws. He was joined *en route* by a few followers and, after presenting his pass to a police officer, he purposely made himself guilty under the terms of the Pass Law for being present in a region/area other than that allowed in his papers. In a similar protest the same day in the town of Sharpeville, police opened fire on a crowd of PAC supporters, killing 69 in the Sharpeville massacre. We drove along that road in Sharpeville where the African people had marched and where the white rabbits had recoiled in fear and opened fire on unarmed marchers. They are now re-enacting that same conduct in occupied Palestine. We stopped at the monument erected in honor of those who were killed that day. The monument was located directly opposite the hated police station.

Sobukwe was arrested, charged and convicted of incitement, and sentenced to three years in prison. After serving his sentence, he was kept in prison, this time without trial, on Robben Island. When I visited Robben Island in 2002 I was shown the house in which he was confined. The new General Law Amendment Act was passed, allowing his imprisonment to be

renewed annually at the discretion of the Minister of Justice. This procedure became known as the "Sobukwe clause" and went on for a further three years. Sobukwe was the only person imprisoned under this clause.

Sobukwe was kept in solitary confinement but permitted certain privileges including books, newspapers, civilian clothes, bread etc. He lived in a separate area on the island where he had no contact with other prisoners. The only contacts were his secret hand signals whilst outside for exercise. He studied during this time and received among others a degree in economics from the University of London.

Sobukwe was released in 1969. He was allowed to live in Kimberly with his family but remained under house arrest. Kimberley was suggested as an area where he could not easily foster subversive activities and also a place where he could live and work, whilst being easily monitored by the state. He was also restricted through a banning order, which disallowed political activities. Various restrictions barred Sobukwe from traveling overseas, thus curtailing his attempts at furthering his education. For this same reason he had to turn down several positions as a teacher at various locations in the United States.

Robert Sobukwe finished his law degree with the help of a local lawyer, in Galeshewe. On completion he then started his own practice in 1975 in Kimberley.

Due to lung cancer, he was hospitalised in 1977. His doctors requested that the authorities allow him freedom of movement on humanitarian grounds. This request was refused. He died on 27th February 1978. And here was I, 30 years after his death, visiting Sharpsville whose 1960 massacre had ignited the struggle for liberation from oppression.

ROSHNEE - JOHANNESBURG

On my last evening I was taken to the Indian township of Roshnee outside of Johannesburg. I had lectured in Roshnee several times in the past and I was well aware of the discomfort that the *Tableegh Jamaat* felt whenever I was in the town. I was never invited to lecture in Roshnee's grand *Masjid*. Rather my lectures were always arranged in the Community Hall. One of the reasons for this was because women were not allowed to pray in the *Masjid*, but were allowed to sit in an upper floor of the hall. On this occasion as well I could sense that there were many who had deliberately stayed away from my lecture because of sectarian religious reasons. There was quite a demand for my new book on '*Sūrah al-Kahf and the Modern Age*' but I did not have any copies left to put on sale.

I returned to Johannesburg from Soweto on the day of *Jumu'ah* (Friday February 15th 2008) and delivered the *Jumu'ah* talk at the Brixton *Masjid*, and then, that very night, I spoke on the topic of '*Islām and the End of History*' at Johannesburg's Nana Memorial Hall. I never knew that the entire program was recorded for broadcast on the Islamic cable television channel ITV.

A significant difference of opinion erupted in the extended question and answer session between the chairman and myself. We were both scholars of *Islām* and International Relations. But I differed with his view that the Islamic conception of an international order with its *Dār al Islām*, *Dār al-Harb*, and *Khilāfah* had now entered the museum of history. I insisted that the imposter system of secular states that had replaced the *Khilāfah* and *Dār al-Islām*, and was firmly constructed on the foundations of *Shirk*, would survive for only a little longer and would then itself be consigned to the garbage bin of history. It was as certain as the sun rising from the east that the *Khilāfah* would be restored with the advent of *Imām al-Mahdi*, and the restoration of the Islamic

Khilāfah would, *ipso facto* witness the simultaneous restoration of *Dār al-Islām* and the Islamic conception of an international order.

Someone resident in Johannesburg heard the news that an Islamic scholar from the Caribbean island of Trinidad was touring South Africa. He got my telephone contact number and called me to invite me to stay at his home during my brief visit to his city. He was Saleem Varachia, and he had Varachia family members who had settled in Trinidad. I spent that Friday night at his home and learnt from him something of the history of *Islām* in Trinidad. He told me that his grand father's cousin, *Moulvi* Ismail Adam (Varachia), had left India on a ship bound for Cape Town where he intended to join his sister. But the captain of the ship refused to allow him to disembark at Cape Town and, instead, took him all the way to Trinidad. I knew the late *Moulvi* Ismail Adam quite well, and I was pleasantly surprised to learn of the circumstances through which he eventually settled in Trinidad.

I informed my host that there was an Adam Varachia in Trinidad who was his uncle, and who was the Assistant *Imām* at *Masjid Jāmi'ah* in the City of San Fernando (in Trinidad) where I now lived. Indeed, Adam Varachi had a son who was a medical doctor and whose name was also Saleem Varachia. We chatted until late at night with members of the extended Varachia family who kept dropping in to meet the visitor from Trinidad.

LAUDIUM - PRETORIA

Saleem drove me to Laudium in Pretoria the next day (less than an hour's drive) and I lectured that night in the grand *Masjid Jāmi'ah* of Laudium. This Muslim town was famous for having more Mercedes Benz motor cars than any other in South Africa. As usual, we had to record a waiting list of names of those who wanted to get a copy of '*Sūrah al-Kahf* and

the Modern Age'. It was truly something wonderful to witness such a great demand for a book on the *Qur'ān*. I believe that the demand was largely created, however, because of the growing realization that this *Sūrah* of the blessed *Qur'ān* contained within it the key to the understanding of the strange modern world that was unfolding with such ominous implications for Muslims. My previous book, '*Jerusalem in the Qur'ān*', had created a thirst amongst readers who wanted to know even more about the reality of the modern age than had been explained in that book.

I spent the night at the home of my dear friend, Haroon Kalla, whose father was a close colleague of both *Maulānā* Ansari and *Maulānā* Siddiqui. Haroon and his entire Kalla family had extended the same love and friendship to me ever since in my first visit to Laudium in 1987.

GABARONE - BOTSWANA

I flew to Gabarone in Botswana on Monday morning, February 18th, for my third visit to this African city and country. I did not need a visa to enter Botswana. My host, the young and vibrant Imraan Chand, had been deeply influenced by my previous lectures in Gabarone and had consequently joined the *Murābitūn* Sufi movement. We drove from the airport to the residence of a British Muslim who had become his teacher, teaching him to recite the *Qur'ān*. I watched in amazement as this British Muslim, who married a Zulu Muslim woman, trained African Muslim converts to *Islām* to recite the *Qur'ān* so beautifully.

Shamshad Khan, who was a very dear friend, had passed away to Allah's mercy since last I visited Gabarone, and I first went to his grave to pray for him, and then to his home to offer my sympathies to his family. I had stayed as a guest in his home on the occasion of my first visit to Botswana in 2001.

When his daughter, Fatima, learnt that I had brought with me three copies of each of my books as well as DVDs of my lectures she insisted that the box be taken out of the trunk of the car and she promptly bought one copy of each. It was a truly wonderful experience to witness her thirst for knowledge.

A session for women was arranged for that afternoon and I spent a very pleasant time with them. I knew that they would not have a chance to ask questions at the public lecture scheduled for that night, so I gave them a synopsis of that lecture and then allowed them to ask questions to their hearts' content.

The lecture that night on '*Signs of the Last Day in the Modern Age*' attracted a large gathering. The Botswana Pula was worth a little more than the South African Rand and we decided to fix the prices for my books and DVDs of lectures at the same price as in South Africa. I could take only three copies of each book and DVDs of lectures with me on the aircraft and these were very quickly sold out. And so we were back to the waiting list.

I was intrigued by the curious simultaneous meltdown of the US dollar with the South African Rand and the Botswana Pula despite the fact that both South Africa and Botswana produced gold and diamonds and the Botswana economy was sound and the people appeared to be prosperous. Indeed the situation was worse than that. The South African Rand was melting down at a faster rate than the US dollar, and the Botswana Pula appeared to remain pegged all the while to the Rand. But this curious matter concerning these three currencies would soon give way to another subject of even more startling implications since I was about to fly to Harare in Zimbabwe. Mercifully, I did not need a visa to enter Zimbabwe.

HARARE - ZIMBABWE

I was visiting Zimbabwe for the very first time. The name *Zimbabwe* derived from *Dzimbadzemabwe* meaning ‘big house of stone’ in the *Shona* language. The British colonialists had created a state to which they gave the name ‘Southern Rhodesia’. This named honoured the greatest pirate to have ever ripped off the African people, namely Cecil John Rhodes. When the African people succeeded in liberating themselves from white rule they chose to replace the hated British colonial name for their country with the African, ‘Zimbabwe’. Similarly the capital city was renamed ‘Harare’ from the former Salisbury. It is such a pity that Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban still retain their British names.

My flight to Harare arrived earlier than scheduled, in addition to which there was a mistake in respect of my flight arrival information. And so there was no one at the Harare airport to receive me when I arrived from Johannesburg. I therefore decided to change a South African 20 Rand currency note (about US\$3) in order to get some coins with which to make a telephone call to my hosts. When I attempted to change the money and explained why I wanted coins, I was informed that 20 Rands would be insufficient to make a local call. I was advised to enquire from the next counter concerning the cost of a local call. When I did so I learnt that a local call would cost two million Zimbabwe dollars. The bank across the hall had the currency exchange rates displayed and when I checked I miscalculated that cost to be equivalent to approximately US\$70. I sat me down quite firmly on a bench and decided to wait in the airport even until night-time for my pick-up, rather than spend that much money on a single local telephone call.

After sitting for about half-an-hour I got up and started to walk around the airport, and while doing so I spotted the South African Airways counter. I went to them and explained my problem. The man at the SA desk explained to me that I had added one zero too many, and that the cost of the local call was

equivalent to US\$7. But he then very kindly allowed me to use the airline phone to make my local call. What he did not tell me, and I would only learn later, was that the official rate of exchange operational in the airport was different from that recognized just outside the building, and that any taxi driver would have exchanged US\$1 for ten million Zimbabwe dollars.

My host in Harare was Yacoob Lateef, an engineer with considerable experience in gold-mining. Although we were meeting for the first time, he had been in correspondence with me for a few years and with another colleague from Harare, had constantly worked for my visit to Zimbabwe to take place. He and his family extended such unforgettable hospitality to a tired and weary traveler that my spirits were lifted.

Two lectures were scheduled to be delivered in Harare, the first on the Gold *Dinār* and the second on *Dajjāl*, the false Messiah. My host had great difficulty in arranging my lectures because Harare, like so much of the rest of the world, was experiencing the Salafi/Tableegh Jamaat/Sufi sectarian divide. It was the peculiar sickness of these first two groups that they claimed a monopoly on knowledge of true *Islām* and that the rest of us had to be so obstructed that we could never get a chance to teach or preach in any *Masjid* or institution over which they had control. If that was not bad enough there was yet another problem of Sufis who closed their doors as well to those who did not adhere to their own sectarianism.

And so both lectures were delivered in the big auditorium of a local Muslim school. I noticed when I arrived at the school to deliver the first lecture that the Hall had been divided into two sections, with the section on the left reserved for women, and on the right for men, and that a partition had been erected to separate the two sections. When I sat on the stage before the audience, however, I sat in front of the men and, as a consequence, only few of the women could see me. I responded to the seating arrangement by

pointing out my preference for the divinely-ordained way established by *Nabi Muhammad* (*sallallahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*) himself in the *Masjid*, i.e., the men sit in the front and women sit behind them with no barrier in between.

When I returned to the Hall the following night for the second lecture, I found to my surprise that the organizers had followed my advice, removed the partition, and placed the seats for women behind the men. The women were quite happy with the new seating arrangement which conformed with the *Sunnah*, but the five *Maulānās* who eventually arrived to attend the lecture had such profound objections to the new seating arrangement that they refused to enter the Hall and eventually returned to their homes without attending the lecture.

Zimbabwe was experiencing runaway inflation as a consequence of malicious attacks on its currency. Those attacks had been launched because the black African government had, at long last, taken steps to recover the 80-90% of the country’s fertile farmland that a tiny group of white farmers continued to own (in fact to occupy) even after the armed African struggle against Judeo-Christian European rule over the country had ended with success. I had already had a taste of the great difference between the Zimbabwe dollar’s official bank rate of exchange and the market rate. My view, which I expressed in my ‘*Gold Dinār*’ lecture, was that the Zimbabwe Central Bank could solve the problem of inflation by introducing ‘*Gold Dinār*’ and ‘*Silver Dirhams*’ into the market as money. Argentina and Serbia had both solved their own problem of runaway inflation by using gold and silver as money. It was inexplicable that Zimbabwe, which was a producer of gold, had not as yet taken that step.

A wealthy local Muslim who owned the school was so impressed by my lecture that he called me aside and urged me to allow him to arrange a meeting with the Governor of the Zimbabwe Central Bank. I was convinced, however,

that the government knew perfectly well the solution I was suggesting, and had not resorted to that solution for reasons of political and financial expediency.

As I reflected over the fate of the three regional currencies, i.e., the South African Rand, the Botswaman Pula and the Zimbabwe Dollar, it became clear that the monetary system was created by the Judeo-Christian alliance to function as a trap. Once a people entered into it they became vulnerable to be attacked at will, and in the process to be reduced through inflation to poverty.

The ANC government of South Africa had made tremendous efforts since recovering black rule over the country to raise the standard of living of the impoverished black African masses. But whenever the government had raised the masses one step up the ladder of economic wealth, inflation struck to fraudulently cause them to descend by two steps back into poverty. In fact the ANC government was being punished for resisting the Judeo-Christian rulers of the world and for refusing to join in the crusade that had been launched against the government of Zimbabwe.

When I arrived in South Africa at the end of December the Rand was trading against the US dollar at approximately 6.90 Rands to 1 dollar. Within a period of less than two months it had declined in value to approximately 7.90 Rands to 1 dollar, and subsequently even crossed the threshold of 8 Rands to the dollar. Since the US dollar was itself melting down in the greatest and most ominous (preplanned) meltdown in modern monetary history (which we had long years ago anticipated), the implications for the black masses of South Africa were truly gruesome.

The last ANC party elections had witnessed a rebellion against President Mbeki who was defeated by his former Vice President and rival for power, Jacob Zuma. The new head of the ANC had publicly declared his intention to

recover ownership of South Africa's fertile farmland for the black masses from their present white owners. It was thus clear, unless the ANC bowed to the rulers of the world and accepted the *status quo*, the South African Rand would suffer the same fate as the Zimbabwe dollar.

There was only one possible route to escape the attacks that reduced people to poverty through inflation (and that is defined in *Islām* as *Ribā*), and to ensure monetary safety and security, and that was to return to the Gold *Dinār* and Silver *Dirham*.

Mufti Ismail Mink, the local *Mufti*, was a graduate of the Islamic University of Madina, and was the recipient of considerable Saudi financial support in his commendable work amongst the Africans. He had made a name for himself in Southern Africa as a scholar of *Islām* and as a worker, and there were many who had urged that I should meet with him during my visit to Harare.

Mufti Mink came to see me on my second morning in Harare and we sat down together to discuss the matter of 'money'. It was soon clear to me that the Mufti had not studied international monetary economics, but even so, he was open to knowledge on the subject. It did not take him long to agree with me that the present monetary system used around the world of non-redeemable paper currencies was bogus, fraudulent and *Harām*. Of course he would be in serious trouble with the equally bogus Saudi regime if he were ever to publicly express such a view. He promised to attend my second lecture scheduled for that evening, but because of a serious community problem he unfortunately could not attend.

Another visitor came to see me who had not only visited Trinidad but had actually lived there for six months. He was a Varachia, and Saleem's uncle,

and he disclosed to me that Moulvi Ismail Adam was his uncle. He fondly recalled for me the names of several towns in Trinidad.

My hosts in Harare lamented the fact that my short stay did not allow them the time to show me the great beauty of the country and the city. They insisted that on the occasion of my next visit I must stay with them for a longer period of time. The world famous ‘Victoria Falls’ which was close to Harare was a popular tourist attraction. I remembered the stunning spectacle of Niagara Falls which Aisha and I had experienced as we drove over by car from New York to Toronto. The Victoria Falls promised to be an even more spectacular sight, but I had no time to visit it.

JOHANNESBURG and LAUDIUM

I had a multiple-entry South African visa and that allowed me to re-enter the country. I flew back to Johannesburg on Thursday February 21st and promptly drove to Laudium. The next morning, February 22nd marked my first anniversary of travel. I had left Trinidad exactly one year earlier and I was tired, homesick and hobbling with a walking stick.

I visited the impressive Al-Ghazzali Islamic School in Laudium that morning and was amazed to see that HarunYahya Inc. had grown in size to produce a large number of glossy books for Muslim children. I shared with the Principal and staff members my views on Harun Yahya Inc. and urged them to study the subject and come themselves to an independent judgment. I told some stories to the children and they loved them. I also delivered the *Jumu'ah* talk at the adjoining *Masjid*. That Friday night the Kalla clan all gathered at Ishmael's home and I was delighted to welcome Ismail Jaffar who had studied at the Aleemiyah Institute of Islamic Studies with me. He was a Professor at the University of South Africa in Pretoria. We spent a delightful evening

together. Ishmael led the assembly of *Zikr* in which all of us participated and he then handed the floor over to me to speak on ‘*The Qur’an and Time*’.

I spent Saturday morning packing boxes of my books and DVDs of my lectures to be shipped from Laudium to Harare and Gabarone. I then said goodbye to Laudium and traveled back to Johannesburg. Saleem Varachia celebrated my return to his home by hosting what the South Africans fondly refer to as a *Braai*. That is the local name for a Bar-b-Que. It was a fantastic Bar-b-Que dinner and I promised him that I would have to include it in my travelogue. He combined a menu of Bar-b-Que chicken and lamb ribs with *Kababs* and African *mealie meal*. But I had to carefully control the amount that I ate since I had to lecture in the local *Masjid* close to his home that night.

The audience at the *Masjid* was surprised by my lecture on *Sūrah al-Kahf*. They had been fed on a staple diet of *Tableegh Jamaat* religious knowledge that had been recycled for years and years, and they responded to the new knowledge with unquenchable thirst for yet more. One eager young man was so energized that he could not stop asking questions concerning *Dajjāl*. He displayed a keen intelligence in his effort to grasp the difficult subject. But I knew that a good teacher must inspire such a student to climb the mountain himself rather than to put the student on his back and take him up the mountain. That was the method that my own masterly teacher had adopted in carefully nurturing my own intellectual development.

Saleem took me on a visit to the *Aparthied* Museum in Johannesburg, and in doing so he furthered the cause of my own education. It was a truly memorable experience to visit that museum and it confirmed again and again my view that the Judeo-Christian alliance that had created modern western racist civilization was the Gog and Magog world order.

Saleem also took me on a visit to the most famous gold mine in history. It was located in Johannesburg's Gold Reef City. We had to go down the shaft of the mine in the electric-powered lift (it used to be a mechanical lift) that the miners had themselves used. There was a warning notice that I chose to disregard. It warned those suffering with hyper-tension and with any foot and leg disorder not to go down the mine. Saleem hid away my walking stick and I went down the mine at my own risk on the journey of my life. We had to put on protective headgear and some of us were given battery-powered lanterns which lighted the darkness of the underground passageways of the mine.

We saw gold shining brightly from underground rocks, and our guide explained to us the process through which it was extracted. Indeed, at the end of the tour when we had returned to the surface we were taken to a special room where we saw a documentary film on the history of gold mining at that mine. In addition, we also saw a demonstration of how the ore was melted down and the gold removed from the rest of the ore. A large block of solid gold was smelted before our very eyes.

I was amazed to learn that 1.4 million kilograms of gold were extracted from this mine during the 1920's. I realized that this was Kimberly all over again. 'Big Hole' in Kimberly had delivered more diamonds than anywhere else in recorded history of mankind. It was closed down in 1914 – just in time for the first world war to be deliberately started and for Britain to wrest control over Jerusalem and the Holy Land from Muslims (score one for *Dajjāl*). And then, just after diamonds, here was fabulous gold. Finally, when most of the gold had been extracted, along came oil. Readers can now better understand the *Hadīth* that “*the earth would deliver its treasures to Dajjāl*”. Among those treasures were diamonds, gold and oil.

I had just one more engagement in Johannesburg before flying back to Cape Town, and that was to be interviewed by Sister Shamima at the Islamic Cable Television Channel, ITV.

BACK TO CAPE TOWN

*M*y flight back to Cape Town was scheduled to depart J'burg at 6 in the morning and, as a consequence, I had to be up before 4 am, and to be on the road to the airport immediately after performing *Salāt al-Fajr*. Saleem Varachia drove me to the airport and bid me a sad farewell. He was very kind and hospitable to me, and because of him I had learnt so much that I did not previously know.

It was a nostalgic flight back to Cape Town. I had to spend just one night in that city and then, tomorrow morning, Wednesday February 27th 2008, I would be on my way to Buenos Aires, then to Caracas and then home *Insha Allah*.

Maulānā ‘Abdul ‘Aleem Siddiqui used to travel alone for six months of the year and then return to his home in India. *Maulānā* Ansari never traveled alone for a period greater than five months. I had much for which to thank Allah Most High. I had traveled for one whole year and was still safe from harm despite the very dangerous and wicked attack launched on me in my native Trinidad. Apart from my walking stick I was still in good health.

I was also most grateful to Allah Most High through Whose Kindness I was finally able to pay the debt with my builder from the sales of my new books. In fact, the sales from books were not sufficient to pay the total debt, but Allah Most High sent those who helped me to complete the payment of the debt, and that was a burden off my shoulders.

A local Muslim businessman had built a shopping mall, and he invited me to have lunch with him at the restaurant in the mall that his daughter was managing. He ordered a sumptuous sea-food platter and then proceeded to eat just a tiny amount of food. I do not like to see food wasted, and this sea-food platter was truly delicious. It was a difficult meal for me since I was forced to eat more than I would have liked to eat.

Shaikh Riaad Walls who came to see me that afternoon, is a white South African convert to *Islām* who had studied the religion and was now recognized as a scholar. He was *Imām* at the late *Imām* Haroon's *Masjid*, and that spoke volumes. The *Apartheid* regime had tortured and murdered *Imām* Haroon because he had been preaching *Islām* to the African people and was winning converts to *Islām*. I had a beneficial exchange of views with *Shaikh* Riaad who then took me in his car to his *Masjid* where I was scheduled to deliver my farewell address. I spent some time telling the story of my travels since I departed Cape Town one month earlier, and then spent some time clarifying the concepts of *Dār al-Islām* and *Dār al-Harb*. At the end of the lecture we had a collection for *Masjid Bilāl* in the African township of Kaylitsha.

BUENOS AIRES - ARGENTINA

I realized that I would have to pay overweight from Buenos Aires to Caracas so I mailed three boxes of books and personal effects to Trinidad from Cape Town by sea mail.

I did not need a visa to enter Argentina. My flight to Buenos Aires left Cape Town at 8.30 that Wednesday morning and I arrived at my destination at 2.30 in the afternoon. But I had no one to receive me and I had to overnight in that city before I could fly to Caracas the next day. I did not know what dangers awaited me if I were to venture alone into the city to overnight in a

hotel. Allah Most High was Kind, and I was able to take an airport taxi to downtown Buenos Aires to a hotel, to spend the night and to then return to the airport the next day safe and sound. But it was the most vulnerable time that I had endured during one year of travel.

Pasta is *Halāl*, and that was what I had for lunch at the airport restaurant. While I was eating my Pasta I noticed a small painting on a distant wall of a turbaned *Shaikh* in a sitting position. I ventured close and sure enough it was a prayer room for Muslims.

CARACAS - VENEZUELA

J did not need a visa to enter Venezuela. My flight to Caracas on Thursday February 28th 2008 did not arrive until 8 pm. Maria was there at the airport to receive me, and she took me in her car to the city. Nadiya had kept a hot dinner for us and we sat down to enjoy her home-cooked meal. She had also baked a cake, and I had a piece which I found to be well-baked and delicious. Azizuddin wanted to chat with me. He wanted to know the story of my travels. He was 93 years of age and yet his mind was so sharp.

Nadiya informed me of her success in getting accepted for her PhD at the University of Caracas and of the successful seminar that *Maulānā* Siddiq Ahmad Nasir had conducted at the University. She intended to write her thesis on Islamic Spirituality. I recognized *Dajjāl's* blind right eye in the famous *Hadīth* of Prophet Muhammad (*sallallahu 'alahi wa sallam*) to have been a symbol representing the secular epistemology of modern western civilization. My view, as a consequence, was that secular western scholarship that literally controlled the modern universities of the world was the least competent scholarship in the world to examine and pronounce judgment on a PhD thesis on Islamic Spirituality.

I was tired and sleepy but managed to hold out for some time. The next morning we got caught in massive traffic jam on the way to the airport. The Venezuelan government had completed construction of a new highway from Caracas to the airport. That highway was under construction one year earlier when I visited Caracas. And yet here we were at 6.30 in the morning caught in that brand new highway in a monstrous traffic jam. We eventually found the traffic jam to have been caused by two very suspicious accidents involving trucks. I suspected sabotage on the part of the Venezuelan political opposition whose list of dear friends included the Israeli Mossad and the American CIA.

HOME SWEET HOME

I arrived at the Piarco International Airport in Trinidad on Friday morning, February 29th 2008 – one year and one week after my departure, to be welcomed back home by my dear wife, Aisha, and my equally dear sister, Zaida. Thus ended my extended lecture-tour of about a dozen countries in which I had devoted a special effort to teach subjects such as *‘Sūrah al-Kahf and the Modern Age’*, *‘Signs of the Last Day in the Modern Age’*, *‘The Strategic Importance of Islamic Spirituality’*, *‘The Gold Dinār and Silver Dirham – Islām and the Future of Money’*, etc. I had done so since I considered these to be some of the most important subjects to which Muslims ought to focus attention at this time. I knew perfectly well that those such as the *Tableegh Jamaat*, *Salafis*, *ASJA*, and even some Sufi groups who had denied me freedom to even speak in *Masājīd* under their control, could not indefinitely treat their followers as blind sheep, and that one day Truth would demolish the unjust and sinful barriers they had constructed to prevent me from teaching and guiding members of those groups.

May Allah Most High bless each and every one who helped me to accomplish this year-long lecture-tour. *Āmīn!*

I managed to rest for just one week before plunging into writing this travelogue which I completed after three weeks of continuous writing.

I must now devote myself to helping Aisha in and around the house before I can return to work to proof-read and approve of the new formatting for Dr Ansari's *magnum opus* '*The Qur'anic Foundations and Structure of Muslim Society*'. Alamgir in Sydney worked for the last two months single-handedly to correct the retyped and reformatted text that was submitted by the team working on the book in KL, and all that now remains for it to be published is my final approval.

After that work has, *Inshā Allah*, been accomplished, I still have four new books to write before I can travel again. The titles of the new books are:

- *Gog and Magog in the Modern World*;
- *Dajjāl the False Messiah in the Modern World*;
- *An Islamic View of the Return of Jesus (peace be upon him)*; and
- *The Life Works and Thought of Maulānā Dr Ansari*.

I will, *Inshā Allah*, be breaking new ground in respect of each of these four titles, and I pray that I might be rightly-guided and protected from error. May Allah Most Kind also grant me life and health to write these new books. *Āmīn!*

Since my return I have been devoting attention to such mundane things as my 21 year-old Toyota Cressida car. My brother was driving it a few months ago when a truck hit the front of the car. It has now been repaired and repainted. But I had to overhaul the engine, repair the air-conditioning, and so many other time-consuming things. I must also now put up a tent in the back-

yard of my home where I can conduct classes as well as the weekly *Halaqa al-Zikr* in which we will recite *Sūrah al-Kahf*, *Insha Allah*.

A FINAL WORD

Let me now end with a final word. My year-long travels confirmed, once again, that power around the world (even in the Muslim world) is now firmly established on the foundations of money. The financial meltdown that is now taking place around the world is meant to facilitate the realization of Israel's quest to rule the world from Jerusalem. As money melts down prices rise and, as a consequence, the masses of people become poorer and yet poorer until they are imprisoned in destitution and are incapable of offering any significant resistance to oppression. This is particularly so for the masses in the world of *Islām*. And yet, after having traveled for one year and visited so many countries I have found very few religious scholars (of *Islām*) who use the *Qur'ān* to respond to this challenge.

The reason arrogant wicked oppressors, and others who are the scum of the earth can use money to control the world is because there are so many who, like cattle, can be bought and sold. Those who read this travelogue should struggle to become such true servants of Allah Most High who have 'eyes' and can 'see', and backbones made of steel, and who cannot therefore be deceived by those who, with check-books in their pockets, corruptly promote themselves and their cause. Our readers must ensure that they are not up for sale, and that they can never be bought, - not with a check, a job, a contract, or even with a mountain of gold.

The *Kuffar* control money and money controls the world. The worst member of a Muslim community can now assume a leadership role through the clever use of money. And this is precisely what has happened in my own

native island of Trinidad. Our readers must distance themselves and their families from all such corrupt and misguided leaders and their corrupt followers. If they fail to do so they will have to answer on Judgment Day for the sins and wickedness of their leaders.

The essential contest in the world today is between Truth and falsehood, i.e. between the true and sincere servants of Allah Most High who have been unjustly reduced to poverty while their rivals have been constantly enriched at their expense. Truth is bound to prevail in this contest. But our readers must be reminded that Truth is in the *Qur'ān*, and it is with the *Qur'ān* that they must fight their battles for Truth to prevail.



APPENDIX

A BHUTTO IS A BHUTTO — A DIFFERENT VIEW OF BENAZIR'S ASSASSINATION

The Anglo-American-Israeli triple alliance which now rules the world from London, Washington and Jerusalem, and which wages unjust war on *Islām* and Muslims on behalf of the Euro-Jewish State of Israel, has lost in the assassination of Benazir Bhutto one who proclaimed herself to be their dearest friend and supporter.

She walked the extra mile, and talked even more than that, to convince them that she was a sincere friend and ally. *Indeed, in becoming their friend and ally she was actually becoming a part of their community and was effectively leaving the community of Islām (Qur'ān, al-Māidah, 5:49).* It is thus clear that she could not have been a martyr in the Islamic sense of the term. She chose to act in the way that she did because she understood perfectly well that Pakistan, like Saudi Arabia and the rest of the world of *Islām*, was different from the rest of the world in the sense that the ruling Jewish-Christian alliance that had created the world-order would never tolerate the survival of any regime in any Muslim country, or even leadership over any Islamic organisation, unless it was subservient to them. Muslims who want to preserve their faith in *Islām* must take heed and refuse to associate with so-called Muslim leaders and so-called Islamic associations which bow to and serve the interests of those enemies of *Islām*.

Even though she bowed to them, I believe that they suspected Benazir's sincerity, and that they must be quietly relieved that she is no more. After all, they knew what they did to her father, and she knew it as well; and the possibility existed that there must have burned in a daughter's heart a deeply held desire to avenge the gruesome and humiliating assassination/hanging

death of a father she adored. It would be rash for anyone to dismiss the possibility that the events we now recall were in some way related to her assassination. Indeed a summary dismissal of our arguments will raise more questions, rather than resolve the problems posed by the essay.

WHAT THEY DID TO HER FATHER

When Israel launched her unjust so-called pre-emptive war of aggression on the Arabs and Muslims in 1967, that country succeeded in wresting military control over Jerusalem and over *Masjid al-Aqsā*. This *Masjid*, which was originally built by Prophet Solomon (*‘alaihi al-Salām*), was universally recognized as the third of the three holiest *Masājīd* in *Islām*, - the other two being the *Masjid al-Harām (Ka’aba)* built by Father Abraham (*‘alaihi al-Salām*) in Makkah, and the *Masjid al-Nabi* in Madina which was built by Prophet Muhammad himself (peace and blessings of Allah Most High be upon him).

The loss of Jerusalem and of *Masjid al-Aqsā* affected Saudi Arabia’s King Faisal so traumatically that he took courageous steps to terminate that country’s client-state relationship with the Jewish-Christian alliance that ruled the world. Faisal took carefully prepared steps to mend his relationship with Egypt’s Gamal Abdel Nasser and to put an end to the proxy war that their two countries had been waging in Yemen. When Nasser died in 1970 Faisal then continued his efforts to forge a Saudi-Egyptian alliance with Nasser’s successor, Anwar Sadat. Those efforts bore fruit, and by October 1973 Egypt felt herself ready to avenge the humiliating defeat at the hands of Israel in 1967. Simultaneous with the launch of war on Israel (in response to Israeli aggression) in October 1973 – an attack that caught Israel completely by surprise and could have resulted in an Israeli defeat had it not been for massive American military intervention in the war – Faisal unveiled his master plan. He imposed an Arab oil boycott on the US. The bogus and utterly fraudulent

US dollar, which had been floating at US\$40 per ounce of gold, suddenly sank by 400% to US\$160 per ounce of gold, and American motorists were queuing in lines a mile long to buy gas for their motor cars.

The political genius of Pakistan's Prime Minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, recognized the unique opportunity that had emerged with the dramatic successes of the war and the oil boycott, and grasped that opportunity to forge a Pakistani-Saudi anti-systemic alliance. Bhutto's political acumen, when combined with the moral and spiritual authority of Faisal's sincere faith, would now function as the foundation for launching an effort to restore political and economic independence to the world of *Islām*. Whether Bhutto's initiative was made in the context of faith in *Islām* or for essentially selfish motives of self-aggrandizement, does not negate the fact of the initiative.

Within an amazingly short period of less than four months, Bhutto succeeded in hosting the Lahore Islamic Summit Conference that brought together the largest and most representative gathering of Muslim leaders since the collapse of the Islamic Caliphate in 1924. Bhutto's critics have since continued to behave like ostriches with their heads in the sand pretending that the summit never took place, or that it was an event of no significance.

In fact the US administration vigorously opposed that Islamic Summit. Henry Kissinger warned Bhutto of dire consequences of hosting such a summit. Prime Minister Kosygin of the USSR did the same. The Shah of Iran was used to try to obstruct the convening of the Summit. However, nothing could stand in Bhutto's way. He courageously defied the Anglo-American-Israeli alliance and the Summit was successfully held in Lahore in February 1974. Bhutto set modest and realistic political and economic goals that he sought to achieve in the Summit, and he was successful in achieving those goals.

Bhutto the actor also brought Machiavellian drama to the Summit when he reconciled with Bangladesh's Mujibur Rahman and cleverly used the platform of the Summit to extend political recognition to Bangladesh. That new country had emerged on the map of South Asia from a truncated Pakistan after Indian military intervention forced a humiliating surrender on Pakistani forces in Dhaka.

INDIA RESPONDS TO THE ISLAMIC SUMMIT WITH A NUCLEAR WARNING

Bhutto's initiative so rattled the Anglo-American-Israeli alliance that two months after the Summit, in April 1974, their Indian ally launched her first nuclear explosion and entered into the nuclear club. It is quite likely that the timing of the Indian nuclear explosion represented a carefully calculated political and military warning against the emergence of an Islamic bloc that would be independent of the Anglo-American-Israeli embrace. India was also, and for her own reasons, resolutely opposed to the emergence of an Islamic bloc. Indeed so opposed were the Indians that they had courted public humiliation in 1970 when a gate-crashing Indian delegation was thrown out of the Rabat Islamic Summit Conference.

Bhutto's response to the Indian nuclear explosion confirmed beyond any doubt his commitment to an independent Pakistan that would be free from Indo-American hegemony. He emotionally and publicly launched Pakistan on a do-or-die national effort to achieve a Pakistani nuclear response (to India's entry into the nuclear club) and announced that the effort must be pursued *"even if it were to take a thousand years and even if we have to eat grass"*. However, money did not really constitute a problem since, so long as the Saudi-Pakistani alliance remained intact, it would always be possible for Saudi Arabia to fund that Pakistani effort. In fact, it took just a few years for

Bhutto's dream to be realized and for Pakistan to dramatically succeed in entering the nuclear club. That was no mean achievement – but blind hatred on the part of Bhutto's critics renders them incapable of even grudgingly recognizing any of his achievements.

This essay is primarily concerned, however, with the consequences that emerged for Faisal and Bhutto for having dared to defy the Jewish-Christian alliance. (See: *"The Qur'an prohibits Muslim friendship and alliance with a Jewish-Christian alliance"* located on my website www.imranhosein.org).

In August 1975, one year after the Lahore Summit and less than two years after the oil boycott on the US, Faisal was assassinated. Those who planned the assassination demonstrated their evil genius (long before 9/11) when they succeeded in drugging, brainwashing and hypnotizing one of Faisal's nephews, then a student at an American university, to return to Saudi Arabia and to shoot his uncle to death. The Saudi royal family recognized those responsible for planning the assassination. They also understood why it had occurred and the message with which it came. But their cowardly and disbelieving response was to betray Faisal, to abandon his independent foreign policy, and to return to the Judeo-Christian Anglo-American-Israeli embrace as a client state. The score then read *"one has gone – one more must go"*. Bhutto's turn was next.

Faisal's death was quick. It took just a moment and it was over. Not so Bhutto, - they made a truly horrible example of him and he suffered worse than a dog before he was assassinated/hanged to death. In 1976, Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party completed its five-year term of office and general elections were due. The Anglo-American-Israeli alliance intervened so dramatically in those elections that Pakistanis resident in USA were sent back home with briefcases packed with millions of dollars. One such money-mule confessed to this writer himself. Pakistani intelligence discovered evidence of

massive intervention and corruption of the electoral process. Bhutto counter-attacked by rigging the election. His enemies then responded by financing such violent street demonstrations and riots that it was Iran in 1952 all over again. The CIA had brought down Dr Mossadiq's nationalist Iranian government in 1952 while using the same strategy. The fact that Bhutto had many enemies made the task easier for them this time around.

Street demonstrations and riots eventually created political conditions that were used to justify a pre-planned military *coup-d'état*. Predictably, the military *coup d'état* installed a pro-American military dictator. Bhutto was arrested and spent more than a year in jail (in humiliating conditions that he described to be worse than that of a dog) before he was assassinated/hanged to death as an accomplice to murder.

The message to the world was now clear: Both were gone – and so too would any other Pakistani or Saudi Muslim leader who chose to follow them! Indeed the military dictator who had deposed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto himself had a change of heart and subsequently attempted to take Pakistan out of the Jewish-Christian embrace. But Ziaul Haq paid the price that Panama's Omar Torrejo and many others beside had paid. **His airplane fell out of the sky and he too, died in yet another political assassination planned and executed by the greatest terrorists mankind will ever know.**

Benazir did her very best during her two brief terms as Prime Minister of Pakistan to convince them that she was not her father's daughter, but in the end, it appears to me, they decided that a Bhutto was a Bhutto, and they could not chance another Bhutto! And so on both occasions that she became Prime Minister, she was deposed. However, on this post 9/11 occasion when Israel is so close to achieving a messianic destiny of *ruling the world*, and Benazir's electoral victory was only two weeks away, they had to put her away. ■